STUDYING *The* GLORIOUS QUR'ĀN

Principles and Methodology



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UK ISLAMIC ACADEMY

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ISBN 1 872531 22 9 (PB)
ISBN 1 872531 21 0 (HB)

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General Editor: Iqbal Ahmad Azami

Published by

UK Islamic Academy
PO Box 6645
Leicester LE5 5WT
United Kingdom

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Design and Typeset by: Muhammad al-Madani



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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Foreword

It is my pleasure to be able to introduce to an English-speaking audience, the early thoughts and impressions of Sayyed Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, a leading scholar of Islam, on how best to study and appreciate the glorious Qur'ān.

Unlike human knowledge which is based on conjecture and supposition, and as such is imperfect and limited, the Qur'ān is conclusive and indisputable. It is the Fountainhead of Divine Knowledge, it is Ultimate and needs no change. It too directs us to the way of its understanding and appreciation, and it is this which the author has identified for us, with direct and meaningful quotations taken from the Qur'ān itself.

Essentially, the Qur'ān directs man towards a way of life which is equally good in all spheres of human activity. It leads to the path of peace. It promises light for those who live according to its prescriptions and it describes the morals, manners, character, conduct and attributes desirable for all men and women.

The Qur'ān is immortal. It makes no distinction between past and present, old and new. Its approach is general, yet remains the same for all types of cultures and times. It provides us with a true mirror of human nature as a living Book:

> *"In their stories verily there is a lesson for men of understanding. It is no invented story but a confirmation of the existing (Scripture) and a detailed explanation of everything and a guidance and a mercy for folk who belief"* [Sūrah Yūsuf 12: 111].

Earlier religions are deficient as compared to Islam because they were meant for a specific time whereas this Revelation is final and terminal. Precisely because it is Divine, the Qur'ān is free from all human error, it is perfect in all respect and it is universal:

> *"This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion al-Islam"* [Sūrah al-Māidah 5: 3].

Furthermore, the Divine Scriptures revealed before the Qur'ān were subject to alteration. The Qur'ān, the last Revealed Book, confirms and protects all other Revealed Books. Furthermore, the Qur'ān is protected from corruption, accretion and mutilation by means of memorisation, propagation and recitation. The moment the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) recited any new verse, the Companions memorised it. Additionally, the Muslims were dependent on the Qur'ān for their Prayers, law, culture, social order and life in general. So many early Muslims had

a deep attachment to the Qur'ān and, hence, they too memorised it. It exists today in its original form unaltered and undistorted. Allah, the Almighty has Himself taken the responsibility of preserving the Qur'ān. He says,

> *"We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; And We will assuredly Guard it (from corruption)"* [Sūrah al-Ḥijr 15 :9].

Not only this, but the Qur'ān itself claims to be a miracle not in terms of its eloquence and excellence but in its words, their order, subject matter, meanings, knowledge and information of the Unseen, and in its religious, moral, social and civic teachings:

> *"Verily We have brought them a Scripture which We expound with knowledge, guidance and a mercy for a people who believe"*
> [Sūrah al- A'rāf 7:52].

Furthermore, the Qur'ān contains much information about history, geography, physics, astronomy, celestial bodies, life sciences, medicine and the creation of man. Nothing in the Qur'ān contradicts modern discoveries; on the contrary it contains realities which have only recently come to be known.

In helping us to know how best to profit from the Qur'ān, the author also documents for us those conditions which are necessary for so doing. For example, accepting its teachings totally and following them, and acknowledging it as a guide in all walks of life. Those qualities which help in an understanding of the Qur'ān are also given, not least hearing and obeying, fear of God-consciousness, and belief in the Unseen. Lest we become lax in any of this though, the impediments to profiting from the Qur'ān are also lucidly presented and include pride, i.e. false sense of dignity and conceit, and an over pre-occupation with this world and its materiality.

Finally, we are shown in a series of anecdotes, how exemplary figures from Islam's glorious past recited and contemplated the Qur'ān. Theirs' are examples for us all.

I would like to thank Sarah Nakhooda and Susan Thakeray for language editing and Mr. E.R. Fox and his team for copy editing and typesetting. I would also like to thank my daughter Su'ād and my son Muhammad al-Madani for their contributions, and also the rest of my family who have remained a constant source of support from the beginning of this book to its publication.

May Allah accept our humble efforts and forgive us in this world and the Hereafter.

Leicester, United kingdom **Iqbal Ahmad Azami**
Rabī' al-Awwal 1424 AH



In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Introduction

I cannot thank Allah enough for the good fortune and pleasure I feel in presenting this book to you. No other work of mine has been so long in coming to fruition, and in this there is also a story which I will now briefly relate to you.

In 1934, I was appointed as a tutor in Dārul 'Ulūm Nadwat-ul-'Ulamā' and entrusted with two subjects: Arabic Literature and Exegesis (*Tafsīr*) of the glorious Qur'ān. The old books of exegeses of the Qur'ān (such as Jalālain, Baiḍāwī and Kashshāf) were already included in the curriculum. Furthermore, there was a particular emphasis that students should be given a general exposé of the glorious Qur'ān. Thus, the curriculum was arranged according to the standards and abilities of the students in such a manner that no part of it was left out. This system was a speciality of Nadwat-ul-'Ulamā', one whereby it excelled other institutions.

During this period, I felt that it was necessary to introduce the glorious Qur'ān to students, to acquaint them with the real purpose and central theme and to prepare and enable them to profit from this great Book. It was also important to warn them about the shortcomings and weaknesses which sometimes prevent one from benefiting fully from the useful effects and blessings which the Qur'ān itself has pointed out. These elements comprise the principles for appreciating and understanding the Holy Book. They serve as a guide and through them the understanding of the glorious Qur'ān, the depth of which is unfathomable, is made easy and certain.

To this end, as a tutor at Nadwat-ul-'Ulamā', I undertook the preparation of a series of "Essays on the Qur'ān" during the period 1936-37.

This novel experiment was a bold step not only for Nadwat-ul-'Ulamā' but for other Arabic and Islamic institutions too. Perhaps to be expected, the quality and intensity of the subject increased over the years and students took great interest in it realising its usefulness to them. Thereafter, these "Essays" were dictated in class and the students examined on them. Once the students completed their exams, they returned to their respective homes and most lost touch with Dārul 'Ulūm. The author, too became engaged in other activities. However, some former students who had taken part in these lessons and who had experienced the efficacy of them, insisted that they be made available to others. In this way, despite the lapse of many years, the author's desire to compile and edit these Essays was rekindled. Unfortunately, though the notes and articles had been lost due to the lack of proper record keeping.

Then, after a long time the author learned that they had been preserved by an ex-student. I felt as if a lost treasure had been found and it gave me new hope.

However, when the manuscript was examined, many new additions in light of experience seemed necessary. Time, though was the overriding problem and hence, in an attempt to overcome these shortcomings, only a few additions have been made. An article entitled "The Glorious Qur'ān and Revealed Books in the Light of History" has been added from the author's work *Concept of Prophethood in Islam,* and a few anecdotes have been included from the lives of bygone people about the way they read and respected the glorious Qur'ān.

Advice to the reader

To derive the maximum benefit from the study of the glorious Qur'ān:

- One should focus on a small section at a time.
- One should remain occupied with the recitation of the glorious Qur'ān in order to establish a strong personal bond and draw near to Allah through it.
- One should take delight in reciting it, and contemplate on its meanings and subjects.
- If one has a working knowledge of Arabic and the ability to understand it, then one should try to profit from it directly. Otherwise, study any authentic translation or short notes and, as far as possible, depend on their teachings and explanations without continually referring to commentaries. If one then grasps its meanings and its purpose, one should thank Allah for it.
- If one wants to remove any doubts or feels it necessary to go deep into the "cause of revelation", or to research a word, etc., one should avoid lengthy and difficult detail.
- Sometimes the reflection of human thought and knowledge falls on the clear spring of the glorious Qur'ān like the shadow of a tree in crystal-clear water. Then the "Word of God" does not retain its originality, sweetness and appeal which is its very essence. It sometimes happens that one is more influenced by the way of thinking of a capable and intelligent person than the way one is impressed by the glorious Qur'ān. At times one may think that the magnificence and greatness, beauty and elegance would not be evident without these teachings, or a person may become used to looking at the "Word of God" through a particular commentator or interpreter.

It is hoped that this translation of the book will help English-speaking Muslims in their study and understanding of the glorious Qur'ān. Herein, the reader will not only learn many valuable points but will also appreciate the shortcomings which prevent reaping full advantage from study of the Holy Book. Many miraculous facets will also come to light which may not have been described in detail perhaps in any other book in English.

Sayyed Abul Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī

CHAPTER 1

The Glorious Qur'ān Introduces Itself

Whatever the glorious Qur'ān says about itself sheds light on its singularity and merit and the many and various aspects of the grandeur and miracles, which are not apparent in the ordinary course of events, become evident. When scattered verses in which the glorious Qur'ān has been introduced are brought together new vistas are opened. The following verses are often quoted with notes:

1. The glorious Qur'ān is conclusive and indisputable:

The miraculous and superhuman aspect of the glorious Qur'ān is its decisiveness and infallibility.

> *This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil).* [al-Baqarah 2: 2]

> *...and an exposition of that which is decreed for mankind – therein is no doubt – from the Lord of the Worlds.* [Yūnus 10: 37]

> *...Lo! It is an unassailable Scripture. Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or from behind it. (It is) a revelation from the Wise, the Owner of Praise.* [Fuṣṣilat/Ḥā Mīm as-Sajdah 41: 41–2]

No other work can equal the glorious Qur'ān in this uniqueness because its fountainhead is Divine (Knowledge). The source is free from any kind of defect or deficiency, doubt or suspicion, conflict or contradiction. What it contains is certain and decisive, identical and final. The knowledge of Allah is Ultimate and does not need change:

> *He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is Knower of all things.* [al-Ḥadīd 57: 3]

His Knowledge is circumambient and encompasses everything:

> *Your God is only Allah, than Whom there is no other God. He embraceth all things in His knowledge.* [Ṭā Hā 20: 98]
>
> *...He surroundeth all their doings, and He keepeth count of all things.* [al-Jinn 72: 28]

Forgetfulness or inaccuracy are impossible:

> *He (Moses) said: The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a Record. My Lord neither erreth nor forgetteth.* [Ṭā Hā 20: 52]

He is aware of everything – tangible and intangible – nothing escapes His knowledge:

> *...(He is) the Knower of the Unseen. Not an atom's weight, or less than that or greater, escapeth Him in the heavens or in the earth, but it is in a clear Record.* [Sabā' 34: 3]

The Book of Allah originated from the Knowledge of Allah. It is, therefore, the bearer and manifestation of His Attributes:

And if they answer not your prayer, then know that it is revealed only in the Knowledge of Allah; and that there is no God save Him. Will ye then be (of) those who surrender? [Hūd 11: 14]

Verily We have brought them a Scripture which We expound with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. [al-A'rāf 7: 52]

There is no contradiction in this Book (because its source is the Knowledge of Allah). The contradictions occur on account of ignorance or lack of knowledge, forgetfulness or inattention, lies or slander. He is Flawless and Perfect. That is why His Word (revelations) are free from contradiction:

Will they not then ponder on the Qur'ān? If it had been from other than Allah they would have found therein much incongruity. [an-Nisā' 4: 82]

It happens that the source of any knowledge be sound but for some persons the medium of information may not be trustworthy. It emanated from its original source correct and sound but it did not remain so by the time it reached the other end. The glorious Qur'ān confirmed that the source of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) is Divine revelation and it is absolutely safe and secure. There is decidedly no chance of any interference in it:

And lo! It is a revelation of the Lord of the Worlds, which the True Spirit hath brought down upon thy heart, that thou mayst be (one) of the warners in plain Arabic speech. [ash-Shu'arā' 26: 192–5]

Nor doth he speak of (his own) desire. It is naught save an inspiration that is inspired. [an-Najm 53: 3–4]

> *Say: The holy Spirit (Gabriel) hath revealed it from thy Lord with truth, that it may confirm (the faith of) those who believe, and as guidance and good tidings for those who have surrendered (to Allah).* [an-Naḥl 16: 102]

> *That this is in truth the word of an honoured messenger, mighty, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne.* [at-Takwīr 81: 19–20]

The detailed knowledge of Allah's pleasure and displeasure and His Commands cannot be known without His teaching through conjecture. Man himself cannot know what another man thinks or commands by intuition at all times.

In the same way, man will make a thousand and one mistakes in law-making, politics and ethics. There will be a clash between different laws and systems because their source would not be one – the different nations will fight and there will be a clash of interests. Man-made systems will pass through different stages because of a lack of foresight; the process of selection and elimination, preference and opposition will continue *ad infinitum*. There will be innumerable revolutions and movements for reform and man will never be at peace with himself.

The fountain of all these evils is man's knowledge which is imperfect and he depends on it though it is doubtful and perverse:

> *...and of knowledge ye have been vouchsafed but little.* [Banī Isrā'īl 17: 85]

We now compare human knowledge to divine revelation. The sources of human knowledge are neither safe nor flawless. They are often based on conjecture and supposition and these sources, besides being limited, are not as dependable as the prophets' (peace be on all of them). The best source of knowledge for man are his five senses, but the

knowledge he gets from them is superficial. The basis of his knowledge in intellectualism too are, in fact, his perceptions. He infers on the premise of knowledge and perceptions which are not known to him. But these perceptions do sometimes err and can sometimes be deficient. Then there is a wide disparity in the intellectual understanding from man to man (IQ). Then again, the knowledge of man, albeit limited in scope, is not perfect.

There are many problems in the physical world which have not been solved. There are differences of opinion on all subjects. There is an addition to human knowledge with every passing day. There is no limit to advancement. If, however, limits are set, it is detrimental to knowledge and, if no limits are set, it is an indication that acquired knowledge is doubtful and imperfect and both of them are not free from uncertainty or defect:

> *Most of them follow naught but conjecture. Assuredly conjecture can by no means take the place of truth. Lo! Allah is Aware of what they do.* [Yūnus 10: 36]

> *...They follow but a guess, and lo! a guess can never take the place of truth.* [an-Najm 53: 28]

2. The glorious Qur'ān is Distinct and Irrefutable:

This is in respect of the principles of religion and that which is necessary for salvation in the Next World and success in this world. They are clear and plain:

> *Shall I seek other than Allah for Judge, when He it is Who hath revealed unto you (this) Scripture, fully explained?* [al-An'ām 6: 114]

> *Verily We have brought them a Scripture which We expound with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe.* [al-A'rāf 7: 52]

> *Alif. Lām. Rā. (This is) a Scripture the revelations whereof are perfected and then expounded. (It cometh) from One Wise, Informed.* [Hūd 11: 1]

> *And this Qur'ān is not such as could ever be invented in despite of Allah; but it is a confirmation of that which was before it and an exposition of that which is decreed for mankind – therein is no doubt – from the Lord of the Worlds.* [Yūnus 10: 37]

But in Islam the concept of religion is not as narrow as some people of other religions have presumed. The basic concept of man is that he is the "bondman" of Allah and he is not free to do "what he will" in any sphere of life. Every act, including governance (rule), which appears to be opposed to "bondmanship", is a manifestation of his "bondmanship". The question about the division between religion and politics does not arise according to the accepted principle. The "bondman" has been given a complete and perfect "code of laws" from his Master (the Creator) in the form of the glorious Qur'ān. The "bondman" can live his life with all-round success according to this Book. The Book does not need any additions on politics.

3. The glorious Qur'ān distinguishes between true and false and it is such a quality which has been mentioned as one of its many nomenclatures:

> *Blessed is He Who hath revealed unto His slave the Criterion (of right and wrong), that he may be a warner to the peoples.* [al-Furqān 25: 1]

The distinction and division which the glorious Qur'ān has made between righteousness and unrighteousness, belief (*Īmān*) and unbelief (*Kufr*), (divine) pleasure and displeasure, conviction and conjecture, lawful (having religious sanction) and unlawful until Doomsday is not found in other revelations.

For example, the glorious Qur'ān has made a superb distinction between Unitarianism (*tawḥīd*) and polytheism (*shirk*) and has removed all ambiguities and uncertainties – this is its miracle.

> *...The right direction is henceforth distinct from error...* [al-Baqarah 2: 256]
>
> *That Allah may separate the wicked from the good...* [al-Anfāl 8: 37]
>
> *...that he who perished (on that day) might perish by a clear proof (of His Sovereignty) and he who survived might survive by a clear proof (of His Sovereignty)...* [al-Anfāl 8: 42]

4. The glorious Qur'ān confirms the previous revelations:

We must bear the following points in mind:

(i) All the revealed religions, Books and teachings are identical and in complete accord with one another which is proved by many verses of the glorious Qur'ān;

(ii) The revelations prior to the glorious Qur'ān were meant for a particular time and none of them were eternal;

(iii) The glorious Qur'ān is the last of the revealed Books – it is eternal, embraces all principles of earlier religions and will remain current until Doomsday:

> *Lo! We, even We, reveal the Reminder, and lo! We verily are its guardian.* [al-Ḥijr 15: 9]

When we accept these facts it becomes easier to sustain the claim that the glorious Qur'ān confirms the previous revealed Books and it serves as an authentic proof and criterion of their real teachings. The sections of these Books which are identical with the glorious Qur'ān are true and protected and those

which differ in principle have been tampered with and are not valid.

There are many verses in which it has been asserted that it confirms the truths of previous revealed Books and both these qualities are mentioned in the following verses:

> *And unto thee have We revealed the Scripture with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and a watcher over it...* [al-Mā'idah 5: 48]

5. The glorious Qur'ān directs man towards the path of peace and well-being and brings him out from darkness into light:

> *...Now hath come unto you light from Allah and a plain Scripture whereby Allah guideth him who seeketh His good pleasure unto paths of peace. He bringeth them out of darkness unto light by His decree, and guideth them unto a straight path.* [al-Mā'idah 5: 15–16]

> *Alif. Lām. Rā. (This is) a Scripture which We have revealed unto thee (Muḥammad) that thereby thou mayst bring forth mankind from darkness unto light, by the permission of their Lord, unto the path of the Mighty, the Owner of Praise. Allah, unto Whom belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth...* [Ibrāhīm 14: 1–2]

> *He it is Who sendeth down clear revelations unto His slave, that He may bring you forth from darkness unto light; and lo! For you Allah is Full of Pity, Merciful.* [al-Ḥadīd 57: 9]

> *Allah is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false deities. They bring*

them out of light into darkness. Such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein. [al-Baqarah 2: 257]

The glorious Qur'ān directs man towards a way of life which is equally good in all spheres of human activity and which is free from aberrations and dangers. That is why there can be no better interpretation than "paths of peace". It is one of those rare expressions of which no explanation can be given. In fact, all these are the paths of one single highway towards which the glorious Qur'ān points and says:

And (He commandeth you, saying): This is My straight path, so follow it. Follow not other ways, lest ye be parted from His way... [al-An'ām 6: 153]

The excellence of the glorious Qur'ān deserves special attention in that it has always used plural for "darkness" against "light" because if there is no "light" of revelation, there would be no end to darkness in life. There would be darkness at every turn. If the light of religion is removed, there is nothing except "darkness" in the world – and they are many, not one. If a survey were taken it would be found that all other avenues Godwards are confounded. The religious practices are limited to conventions and emulation; beliefs mostly on imprudence and ignorance; thinking based on hypothesis and supposition; most of the knowledge founded on conjecture and guesswork; social conduct founded on inequality and iniquity; law and politics built on experimentation and trials and government run on coercion and tyranny.

...Layer upon layer of darkness. When he holdeth out his hand he scarce can see it. [an-Nūr 24: 40]

In this "sea of darkness" the only light is Allah's "light" which illuminates the sky and the earth:

> *Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth...* [an-Nūr 24: 35]

That is why, in comparison to "darkness", singular (light) has been used. When "light" emanates from this fountainhead, then from where does it shine?

> *And he for whom Allah hath not appointed light, for him there is no light.* [an-Nūr 24: 40]

Those who come out of darkness and the maze of the world through the light of the glorious Qur'ān and the Prophet (peace be on him) get a new life. What pleasure has a blind man in life? They feel that they have got seeing eyes. All the avenues of life and the "coming life" open before them and they see the paths of peace and the "straight path" laid out before them. They tread the path illuminated by Allah and, so long as they are guided by Allah, they do not err.

The difference between these two conditions and the times cannot be described in a better way than that which is stated in the glorious Qur'ān:

> *Is he who was dead and We have raised him unto life, and set for him a light wherein he walketh among men, as him whose similitude is in utter darkness whence he cannot emerge?...* [al-An'ām 6: 122]

Allah promises "light" for those living according to the glorious Qur'ān:

> *O ye who believe! Be mindful of your duty to Allah and put faith in His messenger. He will give you twofold of His mercy and will appoint for you a light wherein ye shall walk, and will forgive you...* [al-Ḥadīd 57: 28]

This light is not specific for the Hereafter but the believer gains a particular insight and power of differentiation; guidance of the Prophet (peace be on him) and the "criterion" which is bestowed on him from Allah. Their way of life is distinct from that of others. The reason for this difference is that their basis is not conjecture and experiment, but revelation and prophetic guidance. There is reference to this distinguishing feature in another verse:

> *O ye who believe! If ye keep your duty to Allah, He will give you discrimination (between right and wrong) and will rid you of your evil thoughts and deeds and will forgive you...* [al-Anfāl 8: 29]

6. That is why the glorious Qur'ān is a mirror in which men of different faiths, thoughts, morals and deeds can see their countenance. It has been mentioned in some places directly and in others indirectly:

> *Now We have revealed unto you a Scripture wherein is your Reminder. Have ye then no sense?* [al-Anbiyā' 21: 10]

The above verse tells us that the glorious Qur'ān is a clear, faithful and honest mirror in which everyone can see his image and know his position in the sight of Allah and in society because it describes the morals and manners, character, conduct and attributes which are desirable for all men. It contains the characteristic traits of all types of men – high and low, rich and poor, good and bad.

The glorious Qur'ān gives an account of the qualities and position of man as understood by a majority of *'ulamā'* (exegetists). Our forebears considered the glorious Qur'ān as a "living" book. They did not consider it to be a book of history or archaeology which deals with past events and peoples of former times, and that it has nothing to do with living peoples and

changing times, innumerable and unaccountable types of men who inhabit the world. Everything was clear and well-defined for them. They used to seek guidance from the Scripture and looked for their morals and manners in this unique and wonderful book and found their true "self" in it. If it was what it should be they used to thank Allah for that. If, on the contrary, it was other than what it should be, they used to ask forgiveness of Allah and try to mend their ways.

This verse reminds me of Aḥnaf ibn Qays (may Allah have mercy on him), who was an eminent disciple of the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) – a "*Tābi'ī*" and one among the close associates of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (may Allah be pleased with him). His gentleness was proverbial and even when he became angry his sense of honour and zeal knew no bounds. It was said that when Aḥnaf gets angry, a thousand swords are unsheathed.

Once he heard somebody reciting the above verse and he was startled to hear it. He asked to be brought the glorious Qur'ān, adding that he wanted to know his position, where he stood and with which people he bore resemblance or affinity.

He turned the pages of the glorious Qur'ān and came across the following verses:

> *They used to sleep but little of the night, and ere the dawning of each day would seek forgiveness. And in their wealth the beggar and the outcast had due share.* [adh-Dhāriyāt 51: 17–19]

> *Who forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of what We have bestowed on them.* [as-Sajdah 32: 16]

Then he came across the reference to a group of people who have been praised in the following words:

And who spend the night before their Lord, prostrate and standing. [al-Furqān 25: 64]

Those who spend (of that which Allah hath given them) in ease and in adversity, those who control their wrath and are forgiving towards mankind; Allah loveth the good. [Āl 'Imrān 3: 134]

Those who entered the city and the faith before them, love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breasts no need for that which hath been given them, but prefer the (fugitives) above themselves though poverty become their lot. And whoso is saved from his own avarice – such are they who are successful. [al-Ḥashr 59: 9]

And those who shun the worst of sins and indecencies and, when they are wroth, forgive. And those who answer the call of their Lord and establish worship, and whose affairs are a matter of counsel, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them. [ash-Shūrā 42: 37–8]

At this point he stopped and said, "O Allah! I do not find myself among these people." He looked elsewhere in the glorious Qur'ān and he came across the following description of a people:

For when it was said unto them, There is no god save Allah, they were scornful. And said: Shall we forsake our gods for a mad poet? [aṣ-Ṣāffāt 37: 35–6]

Then he found the description of some other people:

And when Allah alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter, are repelled, and when those (whom they worship) beside Him are mentioned, behold! They are glad. [az-Zumar 39: 45]

He also came across the people who will be questioned:

> *What hath brought you to this burning? They will answer: We were not of those who prayed; nor did we feed the wretched; we used to wade (in vain dispute) with (all) waders, and we used to deny the Day of Judgement, till the inevitable came to us.* [al-Muddaththir 74: 42–7]

He stopped again and prayed, "O Allah! I disavow such people." He started turning the pages of the glorious Qur'ān again, and came across the following verse:

> *And (there are) others who have acknowledged their faults. They mixed a righteous action with another that was bad. It may be that Allah will relent toward them. Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful.* [at-Tawbah 9: 102]

When he read the above verse, he cried out, "Allah be praised, I am one of them."

7. One of the miracles of the glorious Qur'ān is that it picked such peoples and nations which are timeless for their particular morals and deeds. It did not mention those crimes which are rare and which man continues out of his criminal tendencies – and mentions those deeds and crimes which are common.

The glorious Qur'ān is an immortal Book inasmuch as there is no division between past and present, old and new. Its approach is general and remains the same for all types of cultures and times. Its preachings are always fresh and up-to-date and in conformity with the prevailing conditions. It is a true mirror of human nature and a living Book. It has been said about it:

> *And verily We have sent down for you revelation that make plain and the example of those who passed away before*

you. An admonition unto those who ward off (evil). [an-Nūr 24: 34]

And verily We have coined for mankind in this Qur'ān all kinds of similitudes that haply they may reflect. A lecture in Arabic containing no crookedness, that haply they may ward off (evil). [az-Zumar 39: 27]

In their history verily there is a lesson for men of understanding. It is no invented story but a confirmation of the existing (Scripture) and a detailed explanation of everything, and a guidance and a mercy for folk who believe. [Yūsuf 12: 111]

CHAPTER 2

The Miracle of the Glorious Qur'ān

The glorious Qur'ān itself claims to be a miracle and it has challenged all those persons who have doubts about its Divinity. The following verses can be read in this regard:

> *And if ye are in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto Our slave (Muḥammad), then produce a sūrah of the like thereof, and call your witnesses beside Allah if ye are truthful.* [al-Baqarah 2: 23]

> *Or they say: He hath invented it! Say: Then bring a sūrah like unto it, and call (for help) on all ye can besides Allah, if ye are truthful.* [Yūnus 10: 38]

> *Or they say: He hath invented it. Say: Then bring ten sūrahs the like thereof, invented, and call on everyone ye can beside Allah, if ye are truthful. And if they answer not your prayer, then know that it is revealed only in the knowledge of Allah; and that there is no God save Him. Will ye then be (of) those who surrender?* [Hūd 11: 13–14]

> *Say: Verily, though mankind and the jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like thereof though they were helpers one of another.* [Banī Isrā'īl 17: 88]

> *Say (unto them, O Muḥammad): Then bring a Scripture from the presence of Allah that giveth clearer guidance than these two (that) I may follow it, if ye are truthful. And if they answer thee not, then know that what they follow is their lusts. And who goeth farther astray than he who followeth his lust without guidance from Allah. Lo! Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk.* [al-Qaṣaṣ 28: 49–50]

Scope of the Miracles of the Glorious Qur'ān

Unbelievers and sceptics have previously been invited to produce the likes of the glorious Qur'ān and yet no similar speech or book has been produced. The glorious Qur'ān is not a miracle in its eloquence and excellence but it is a miracle in its words and their order; in its subjects and meanings; in the knowledge and information of the Unseen; its religious, moral, social, civic teachings, efficacy and far-reaching changes it brings about; in its prophesies and its disclosures of the dim past. When there is no equal in words, which is one aspect of its being a perfect miracle, then how can there be any comparison in all other aspects put together? The verses of Sūrah Hūd 13–14 tell us that the secret of its speciality is that it has been revealed out of the knowledge of Allah and it is a manifestation of His unique knowledge (*'ilm*); then how can man compete with it with his conjectural and doubtful, deficient and limited knowledge which has been given to him by Allah! Man cannot be equal in Allah's attributes and, in the same way, he cannot be equal with Him in His knowledge.

> *And if they answer not your prayer, then know that it is revealed only in the knowledge of Allah; and that there is no God save Him. Will ye then be (of) those who surrender?* [Hūd 11: 14]

The assertion that it has been revealed out of the unique knowledge of Allah shows that He is incomparable in His attributes and Godhood and, in the same way, He is matchless in His knowledge. When there is no god beside Him, how can there be the likes of the Divine Book?

> *Verily We have brought them a Scripture which We expound with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe*. [al-A'rāf 7: 52]

This "knowledge" is not confined to words and their arrangement or diction, but also encompasses deep meanings and eternal truths. The glorious Qur'ān has mentioned that it has been revealed in "clear Arabic" which indicates that it is superior in depth of meaning and superiority of language:

> *Alif. Lām. Rā. These are verses of the Scripture that make plain. Lo! We have revealed it, a Lecture in Arabic, that ye may understand*. [Yūsuf 12: 1–2]

> *...The speech of him at whom they falsely hint is outlandish, and this is clear Arabic speech*. [an-Naḥl 16: 103]

It has been asked in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ to produce any such book which is better than the glorious Qur'ān in terms of guidance and reformation.

> *Say (unto them, O Muḥammad): Then bring a Scripture from the presence of Allah that giveth clearer guidance than these two (that) I may follow it, if ye are truthful*. [al-Qaṣaṣ 28: 49]

The excellence and eloquence of the glorious Qur'ān in the uniqueness of its words is one aspect of its miracles. The *'Ulamā'* of former times made a study of the miracles of the glorious Qur'ān or wrote about it in view of the general

prevailing trend and in accordance with the literary taste and importance of language. No doubt, they provided lots of material in this field as a result of this ingenuity and insight. It is difficult to add to this store of knowledge.

Islam is the First and Foremost Miracle of the Glorious Qur'ān

The glorious Qur'ān presented the final guidance in faith and religion to mankind and no religious guidance was presented in such a distinct and detailed manner and in such unambiguous terms ever before. The earlier religions are deficient compared to Islam because they were meant for a specific time – this revelation is final and terminal. No human ingenuity can formulate a better guide than this to establish a link with the Creator; which develops spirituality and God-consciousness, it keeps away from aberrations and inequalities in which religious nationalities were and are involved. In the same way, it provided mankind with a Divine constitution for a moral and social life; which is responsible for the best moral results for individual and communities and proved it in the past, though such results were never obtained by any earlier method. Islam solves all complex problems that man will face until the end of time. Islam furnishes such principles on which the best social system can be based in every period and a new way of life be organised at any place in the world. Because it is Divine, it is free from all human error in law-making inasmuch as it is the last and final guidance; it is perfect in all respects and, since it is universal, it is free from local and national traits. Islam is eternal and free from any alteration and cancellation, it is perfect and needs no addition.

> *...This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion al-Islam.* [al-Mā'idah 5: 3]

When the principles of Islam are implemented many of those problems which fill the minds of philosophers and social scientists do not emerge. The conclusions which philosophers have reached – after making mistakes and experimenting for thousands of years – the glorious Qur'ān had described them through the unlettered Prophet (peace be on him) thirteen centuries before. The guidance and the constitution which is called Islam is the result of the highest polity (*ḥikmah*) of Allah:

> *...the doing of Allah Who perfecteth all things...* [an-Naml 27: 88]

Because the principles of Islam are derived from the glorious Qur'ān and they have been presented to the world through it, they are a miracle:

> *He it is Who hath sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own to recite unto them His revelations and to make them grow, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom, though heretofore they were indeed in error manifest.* [al-Jumu'ah 62: 2]

The elucidation and arguments for the miracles of the glorious Qur'ān are, in fact, a complete exposition of Islam. The subject is so vast that many libraries can be filled with it. Some of them will, however, be explained in their proper place. It is necessary to ponder seriously on the expanse of the miracles of the glorious Qur'ān in the field of beliefs, their miraculous structure and the wonderful results in moral and social conduct, though it is almost impossible for anyone to fathom its virtues and secrets.

> *And if all the trees in the earth were pens, and the sea, with seven more seas to help it, (were ink) the words of Allah could not be exhausted. Lo! Allah is Mighty, Wise.* [Luqmān 31: 27]

> *Say: Though the seas become ink for the Words of my Lord, verily the sea would be used up before the Words of my Lord were exhausted, even though We brought the like thereof to help.* [al-Kahf 18: 109]

The Other Miracles are Different Branches of Knowledge

The other miracle of the Glorious Qur'ān is the infinite varieties and categories of knowledge which are contained in this Book, and out of which each one is a miracle in itself. The more man advances in knowledge, the more he will know about the elegance of the glorious Qur'ān. In fact, human knowledge is limited and cannot encompass the vastness of the glorious Qur'ān, therefore whatever part of the Qur'ān man understands is sufficient.

> *He sendeth down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure...* [ar-Ra'd 13: 17]

There are many facets of these miracles: one aspect is the perpetuity and finality of truths. This eternalness is, in fact, the speciality of the knowledge and the Book of Allah. Change and ambiguity are necessary ingredients of human knowledge. Because the glorious Qur'ān is perfectly safe, human knowledge makes no difference to its eternity and finality of truths.

Transposition in Old Scriptures

When man starts interfering in scriptures, then so many unnecessary tamperings take place for which there is no guarantee from Allah. Then, human knowledge and ideals become integrated into scripture and, since human knowledge is limited and not definite, the finality and perpetuity of their truth is lost.

The glorious Qur'ān is eternal and final from the beginning to the end. It does not contain changing ideals, research, nor experiments. However human knowledge may advance, however it may broaden in physics, astronomy, or prove that the earth is the centre of the universe, or that the earth is round, or that the planets are populated or not – all these discoveries would not affect the eternal truths of the glorious Qur'ān. It is not the system of Ptolemy which may be proved wrong by Copernicus.

On the other hand, the Bible has suffered from inversions and mistranscriptions, and the views of the public have been inserted into it. The earth is 6,000 years old according to it and its surface is flat; the sun, moon and stars are moving, the earth is the centre of the universe and all the celestial bodies are satellites. Human habitation is difficult on the other side of the earth, because, according to St. Augustine, no such species of Adam has been mentioned (according to the Bible). The most significant argument is that the people on the other side of the earth will see the descent of God on the Day of Judgement.

This "inspirational" history is possible and may be in accord with the compilers and exegetists of the holy book (the Bible) at that time, but it is not true in the present. It may mark a stage of human knowledge then, but it is progressing and not stagnant, the more man advances he leaves that "stage" behind him so much so that at times it becomes difficult for religion and science to walk hand in hand. This was the beginning of the conflict between religion and science and the decline of the former in Europe. But this is not the case in the history of Islam. Human sciences can and do contradict each other. It is just possible that some may be right or some may be wrong or both may be wrong. But this would never be possible in the protected Book of Allah – the glorious Qur'ān. The discoveries of science which are against it are not authentic.

Confirmation of Modern Sciences and Research

To look for modern scientific truths in the glorious Qur'ān and to attempt to corroborate them with the hints and abstract statements which 'Allāma Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī has done in his exegesis *Jawāhir-ul-Qur'ān* is very delicate and to some extent unsafe. There are greater chances (and it has been tried several times) that the theories which are considered axiomatic, proved and certain may change or they may be disproved and become outmoded. Besides, this academic venture, the sincerity of which is neither doubted nor its efficacy denied, would detract from the main purpose and there are possibilities of misgivings and of being overwhelmed by modern science and research. The earlier exegetists have also erred in respect of former philosophies and known historical narratives. Because it was a fraction of the vast and reputable exegeses of the glorious Qur'ān it received no publicity or respectability in Muslim scholarly circles. That is why the glorious Qur'ān did not face any such trial during all this time which the old scriptures had to contend with on account of the addition and inclusion of discoveries in the fields of physics, astronomy and geography and which was known in the Middle Ages as "Christian Science".

But one impartial scholar (who was not influenced by modern science) was awe-struck when studying the glorious Qur'ān – the Book which was revealed to an unlettered Prophet (peace be on him) fourteen centuries ago in Arabia. The Qur'ān contains a lot of information about history, geography, physics, astronomy, celestial bodies, life sciences, medicine and the creation of man. It talks of sciences which have been discovered during the past few hundred years and a whole new world has opened before man; when the entire concept of his knowledge has undergone a radical change. But there is nothing in the Qur'ān which contradicts modern discoveries. In fact, it contains realities which have only recently come to be

known. The expounding of this abstract information needs not one but a series of books. We will confine ourselves to quote from *The Bible, the Qur'ān and Science* by the French scholar, Maurice Bucaille. He writes:

> These scientific considerations, which are very specific, greatly surprised me at first. Up until then, I had not thought it possible for one to find so many statements in a text compiled more than thirteen centuries ago referring to extremely diverse subjects and all of them totally in keeping with modern scientific knowledge (p. 119).

The learned author has made a comparative study about the skies, origin of the earth, the existence of the universe, celestial bodies, their nature and evolution, mountains, vegetation, the animal kingdom, the beginning and evolution of life, procreation, the embryo and foetus and important historical events such as the Exodus, the Pharaoh of the time of the Prophet Moses (peace be on him), physics, astronomy, life sciences, medicine and history, all in the light of modern scientific discoveries, and he concluded that:

> The comparison of several Biblical and Quranic narrations of the same subject shows the existence of fundamental differences between statements in the former, which are scientifically unacceptable, and declarations in the latter which are in perfect agreement with modern data (p. 251).

He concludes his treatise with the following:

> In view of the level of knowledge in Muhammad's day, it is inconceivable that many of the statements in the Quran which are connected with science could have been the work of a man. It is, however, perfectly legitimate not

> only to regard the Quran as the expression of a Revelation, but also to award it a very special place, on account of the guarantee of authenticity it provides and the presence in it of scientific statements which, when studied today, appear as a challenge to explanation in human terms (pp. 251–2).

The glorious Qur'ān is not affected by changing social and political considerations; the guidance it provides in these fields too is eternal.

The Third Miracle is a Description of Unseen Events

The events of earlier Prophets (peace be on all of them) and nations which have been narrated in the glorious Qur'ān are a miracle. The aspect of a miracle is that its source (Prophet Muḥammad – peace be on him) is nothing except revelation. The Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) was unlettered and most of these incidents and events were narrated in the Makkan chapters. Historians agree that there were no Christians or Jews in Makkah at that time. Waraqah ibn Nawfal, who knew the Bible according to an authentic record, died in the first year of Muḥammad's prophethood (after the first revelation).

It is mentioned that before migration the Prophet (peace be on him) met two Christians – Monk Buḥairā and 'Addās. He met the former in Buṣrā (Syria) and the latter in Ṭā'if (Hejaz). The first meeting was for not more than a few hours and the second a few minutes. The first meeting took place when he was thirteen. No sensible person could claim that, at this tender age, and with a language barrier and in such a short space of time, a young boy could cram all that knowledge, expound upon it and spread it over a period of twenty-three years of teaching. 'Addās was not a learned man. He became the Prophet's (peace be on him) follower. That is

why no such story should be woven around these (flimsy) tales that the Prophet's (peace be on him) knowledge of the Unseen, of which each and every word has proved to be true after research, has been derived from those persons whose personality is doubtful and the whole narration (of the Unseen) far exceeds the original (the earlier scriptures). How can a lamp kindle another when itself it has no light! The knowledge of these two Christians was not such that the Prophet (peace be on him) could profit from them.

It has been proved conclusively that the Prophet (peace be on him) had no source for his information for the incidents described by him, and this is a charisma of divine revelation. It contains the following verses after giving details about the birth of Sayyedah Maryam and the Prophet Yaḥyā (peace be on both of them) and some other minor incidents:

> *This is of the tidings of things hidden. We reveal it unto thee (Muḥammad, peace be on him). Thou wast not present with them when they threw their pens (to know) which of them should be the guardian of Mary, nor wast thou present with them when they quarrelled (thereupon).* [Āl 'Imrān 3: 44]

The account says, after giving the events of the Flood at the time of the Prophet Noah (peace be on him):

> *This is of the tidings of the Unseen which We inspire in thee (Muḥammad, peace be on him). Thou thyself knowest it not, nor did thy folk (know it) before this. Then have patience. Lo! The sequel is for those who ward off (evil).* [Hūd 11: 49]

and after recounting the episode of the Prophet Joseph (peace be on him), it says:

> *We narrate unto thee (Muḥammad) the best of narration in that We have inspired in thee this Qur'ān, though aforetime thou wast of the heedless.* [Yūsuf 12: 3]

Then it says:

> *This is of the tidings of the Unseen which We inspire in thee (Muḥammad). Thou wast not present with them when they fixed their plan and they were scheming.* [Yūsuf 12: 102]

The verses assert that these incidents are not fictitious, but confirm the earlier scriptures and:

> *In their history verily there is a lesson for men of understanding. It is no invented story but a confirmation of the existing (Scripture) and a detailed explanation of everything, and a guidance and a mercy for folk who believe.* [Yūsuf 12: 111]

This refutes the allegation of the unbelievers that these events are based on an old or hand-written diary and give out the real source:

> *And they say: Fables of the men of old which he hath had written down so that they are dictated to him morn and evening. Say (unto them, O Muḥammad): He Who knoweth the secrets of the heavens and the earth hath revealed it. Lo! He ever is Forgiving, Merciful.* [al-Furqān 25: 5–6]

In the same chapter it contradicts forcefully the imputation that the Prophet (peace be on him) related these incidents of the glorious Qur'ān with the assistance and collusion of other people:

> *Those who disbelieve say: This is naught but a lie that he hath invented, and other folk have helped him with it, so that they have produced a slander and a lie.* [al-Furqān 25: 4]

The absence of and unawareness of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) has been mentioned at the occurrence of these events in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ and it has again been emphasised that the real source of all this information is divine revelation:

> *And thou (Muḥammad) wast not on the western side (of the Mount) when We expounded unto Moses the commandments, and thou wast not among those present. But We brought forth generations, and their lives dragged on for them, and thou wast not a dweller in Midian reciting unto them Our revelations; but We kept sending (messengers to men). And thou wast not beside the Mount when We did call; but (the knowledge of it is) a mercy from thy Lord that thou mayest warn a folk unto whom no warner came before thee, that haply they may give heed.* [al-Qaṣaṣ 28: 44–6]

The Prophet's (peace be on him) unawareness is mentioned in Sūrah al-'Ankabūt and it is clarified that he was totally unaware of the prevailing conditions and had no schooling. Where, then, is the scope for the sceptics' mistrust about the source of his knowledge:

> *And thou (O Muḥammad) wast not a reader of any Scripture before it, nor didst thou write it with thy right hand, for then might those have doubted, who follow falsehood.* [al-'Ankabūt 29: 48]

CHAPTER 3

The Difference Between the Glorious Qur'ān and Ancient Scriptures

The people who, during the prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), thought that the incidents mentioned in the glorious Qur'ān had been derived from the Bible, were unaware of the Bible. The glorious Qur'ān and the Bible are available even today and, according to the majority of Jews and Christians, their scriptures are intact. These scriptures can be compared with the glorious Qur'ān and their contention can be challenged. It is clear, on going through the narratives of the earlier Prophets (peace be on all of them), in the ancient scriptures and the glorious Qur'ān that they are not derived from one another. No doubt, some portions of these scriptures are so similar and linked that it appears that their original source is one and that is revelation. But it is quite evident that one is original and the other has been interfered with and altered by man. There is a difference in the method and manner of description and the importance of the subject. Their style is altogether different. One has the effect of revelation, the grandeur of eternity of a Divine Book and the "light" of revelation. On reading it one feels that the object of these events is not history but guidance and admonition. It does not contain the number of years or numerical figures. The number of persons and all those details which were concerned with

history and genealogy have been cut short. Only those portions which are meant for the guidance and admonition of men for all times are used:

> *In their history verily there is a lesson for men of understanding. It is no invented story but a confirmation of the existing (Scripture) and a detailed explanation of everything, and a guidance and a mercy for folk who believe*. [Yūsuf 12: 111]

The same spirit was found in the preachings and incidents of the prophets (peace be on all of them) and in the communities of the past and the same dignity of the Word of Allah. It is proof of the glorious Qur'ān's miracle. The Prophet (peace be on him) himself bears these qualities. He keeps away from irrelevant discussions and far-fetched historical detail. He describes just those facts which are good for the guidance and salvation of man. The Pharaoh wanted to draw the Prophet Moses (peace be on him) into a historic dispute, but the Prophet closed the door in a graceful manner and did not lose sight of the main object – preaching. The Pharaoh said:

> *What then is the state of the generations of old?* [Ṭā Hā 20: 51]

The Prophet Moses (peace be on him) replied:

> *...the knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a Record. My Lord neither erreth nor forgetteth*. [Ṭā Hā 20: 52]

This is in contrast to the chapters in Kings, Chronicles and Genesis in the Bible. There, history is predominant, there is a superfluity of dates, ages, numbers of people and tribes and elaborate details of buildings. But we do find traces of revelation at some places and one feels inclined to say that this could be the interpretation of the Word of God.

The Narration of the Prophet Joseph in the Bible and in the Glorious Qur'ān

We have selected the narrative of the Prophet Joseph (peace be on him) to show the difference between the Bible and the glorious Qur'ān which has been described in detail in both books. There are more details in the Bible than in the glorious Qur'ān but these are the portions which list names and dates. The Bible contains the story of Judah which is outrageous for the family of the Prophet Jacob (peace be on him). Also, there are certain allegations about the Prophet Joseph (peace be on him) which are unbecoming of his dignity.

The glorious Qur'ān contains some parts which are not mentioned in the Bible.

1. The befitting and winsome sermon by the Prophet Joseph (peace be on him) on "*tawḥīd*" (Oneness of Allah) is a fine example of intelligent preaching and prophetic advice in which the elegance of the Prophet Joseph (peace be on him) is reflected in full, as mentioned in the glorious Qur'ān and which is not found in the Bible:

> *And two young men went to prison with him. One of them said: I dreamt that I was pressing wine. The other said: I dreamt that I was carrying upon my head bread from which the birds were eating. Tell us the interpretation, for we see you of those who do good. He said: The food which you are given (daily) shall not come to you but I shall tell you the interpretation before it comes to you. This is of that which my Lord has taught me. Truly, I have forsaken the religion of folk who don't believe in Allah and are disbelievers in the Hereafter. And I follow the religion of my fathers, Ibrāhīm and Isḥāq and Ya'qūb. It never was for us to attribute anything as partner to Allah. This is of the bounty*

of Allah to us (the seed of Ibrāhīm) and to mankind; but most men do not give thanks. O my two fellow prisoners! Are many Lords better, or Allah the One, the Almighty? Those whom you worship besides Him are but names which you have named, you and your fathers. Allah has revealed no sanction for them. The decision rests with Allah only, Who has commanded you that you worship none save Him. This is the right religion, but most men know not. O my two fellow prisoners! As for one of you, he will pour out wine for his lord to drink; and as for the other, he will be crucified so that the birds will eat from his head. This is the case judged concerning which you inquired. [Yūsuf 12: 36–41]

The glorious Qur'ān tells us that when the King of Egypt had a dream and heard the interpretation by the Prophet Joseph (peace be on him), who was then in prison, he wanted to meet him. However, the Prophet Joseph chose not to come out of prison at once. He thought it fit to have an enquiry into the incident for which he was imprisoned on false charges; that way the allegation became public, his innocence was publicised and his release would not be taken as an amnesty ordered by the king, but as a result of his innocence. This was in accordance with the dignity of the Prophet, his family, his self-respect and wisdom.

The Bible says:

And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants. And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such "a one" as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? Pharaoh said unto Joseph, For as much as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art. Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my

people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou. [Genesis 41: 37–40]

2. The glorious Qur'ān states:

...And when the messenger came unto him, he (Joseph) said: Return unto thy lord and ask him what was the case of the women who cut their hands. Lo! My Lord knoweth their guile. [Yūsuf 12: 50]

When the accuser at whose instance he (the Prophet Joseph – peace be on him) was sent to prison herself declared his innocence, then he gave the reason for this delay (in coming out of prison) and his demand for an enquiry into the case:

(Then Joseph said: I asked for) this, that he (my lord) may know that I betrayed him not in secret, and that surely Allah guideth not the share of the betrayers. [Yūsuf 12: 52]

Then to remove any doubts about self-praise, he said:

I do not exculpate myself. Lo! The (human) soul enjoineth unto evil, save that whereon my Lord hath mercy. Lo! My Lord is Forgiving, Merciful. [Yūsuf 12: 53]

This is evidently the talk of prophethood and an indication of the character of the Prophet Joseph (peace be on him). This important and effective portion is not found in the Bible.

3. Stories about the Prophet Jacob (peace be on him) in the Bible do not have any glimpses of prophethood and the "light" of godhood which is seen in the glorious Qur'ān. If the Book of Genesis from the Bible and Sūrah Yūsuf in the glorious Qur'ān are compared, it is obvious that he is wise and has total reliance

on Allah. He sees the unseen hand of Allah in every incident. He praises Allah all the time. But in the Bible he is presented as a sympathising, venerable and seasoned family man. The return of the brothers without Benjamin and the Prophet Jacob's (peace be on him) sorrowful and moving talk which shows signs of absolute trust in Allah is not mentioned in the Bible.

4. It has been mentioned in the glorious Qur'ān that when the Prophet Joseph (peace be on him) met his father and brothers in Egypt, he was overwhelmed with gratitude and his heart was filled with praise of Allah. The religious-mindedness of the family and the "light" of prophethood shone in the midst of power, authority and glamour of government and his high position of honour and dignity, and his sense of obedience and devotion came to the fore. He expressed his gratitude and prayed:

> *O my Lord! Thou hast given me (something) of sovereignty and hast taught me (something) of the interpretation of events – Creator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art my Protecting Friend in the world and the Hereafter. Make me to die submissive (unto Thee) and join me to the righteous.* [Yūsuf 12: 101]

This effective verse has also been left out in the Bible. It simply says:

> *And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Be'er-Sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac. And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.* [Genesis 46: 1–2]

Verses 8–25 in Chapter 46 contain the "names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt…"

The Lives of Prophets as Portrayed in the Bible and the Glorious Qur'ān

The remarkable difference between the Bible and the glorious Qur'ān is that the latter has depicted the lives of the prophets (peace be on all of them) as pious and spotless which is befitting of their high office and position. It refutes all false allegations and imputations which were current with their enemies and unlearned followers. But in the Old Testament such insinuations have been made against the prophets (peace be on all of them) so that there seems to be left neither modesty nor shame. They are accused of infidelity at some places and at other times of sin.

Genesis, Chapter 9 talks about Prophet Noah (peace be on him), Chapter 19 about Prophet Lot (peace be on him), in Exodus, Chapter 32 about Prophet Aaron (peace be on him), and in I Kings, Chapter 11 about Prophet Solomon (peace be on him). All are accused of infidelity and polytheism, vice and immorality. But the glorious Qur'ān calls Prophet Noah (peace be on him) trustworthy and blessed with auspiciousness and it has been said about Prophet Lot (peace be on him):

> *And unto Lot We gave judgement and knowledge, and We delivered him from the community that did abominations. Lo! They were folk of evil, lewd.* [al-Anbiyā' 21: 74]

The allegation of cow-worship against Prophet Aaron (peace be on him) in the Bible is as follows:

> *And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf; and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it, and Aaron made proclamation and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.* [Exodus 32: 4–5]

The glorious Qur'ān disproves this and, on the contrary, describes him as a preacher of "*Tawḥīd*" (Oneness of God):

> *And Aaron indeed had told them beforehand: O my people! Ye are but being seduced therewith, for lo! your Lord is the Beneficient, so follow me and obey my order*. [Ṭā Hā 20: 90]

The Bible contains the following passage about the Prophet Solomon (peace be on him):

> *For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashto-reth the goddess of the Zi-do'ni-ans, and after Mil'com the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father*. [I Kings 11: 4–6]

It goes further and says:

> *And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded*. [I Kings 11: 9–10]

But his sincerity and submission, devotion and dignity are described in the glorious Qur'ān as follows:

> *And We bestowed on David, Solomon. How excellent a slave! Lo! He was ever turning in repentance toward Allah.* [Ṣād 38: 30]

And it further says:

> *And lo! He (Solomon) hath favour with Us, and a happy journey's end.* [Ṣād 38: 40]

In the same way, allegations made by the Jews against Mary the mother of Prophet Jesus (peace be on him) are contradicted in the Qur'ān in clear terms and Prophet Jesus (peace be on him) is presented as noble, distinguished and blessed:

> *(And remember) when the Angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter...* [Āl 'Imrān 3: 45]

> *When Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favour unto thee and unto thy mother; how I strengthened thee with the holy Spirit, so that thou spakest unto mankind in the cradle as in maturity; and how I taught thee the Scripture and Wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel...* [al-Mā'idah 5: 110]

> *He (Jesus) spake (when in the cradle) Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet; and hath made me blessed wheresoever I may be...* [Maryam 19: 30–1]

> *When Jesus came with clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty) he said: I have come unto you with wisdom and to make plain some of that concerning which ye differ. So keep your duty to Allah and obey me. Lo! Allah, He is my Lord and your Lord. So worship him. This is the right path...* [az-Zukhruf 43: 63–4]

There are fundamental differences in these subjects, common in the ancient scriptures and the glorious Qur'ān, though their

believers say that the former is free from alteration. Besides, there are other subjects and teachings in which the glorious Qur'ān is unique. So, to say that the information given by the glorious Qur'ān has been derived from earlier scriptures is merely evidence of ignorance of their own religious books. The contents of the glorious Qur'ān are based on direct revelation. That is why it is unimpeachable and free from imperfection and suspicion. It refutes all human falsehoods and the Jews' imputation against the innocent prophets (peace be on all of them) and confirms and protects the truth.

CHAPTER 4

The Warnings About Interpolation in Earlier Scriptures

Another aspect of the miracle of the glorious Qur'ān is that it describes in detail the beliefs and thoughts of the various sects of Jews and Christians with which the common man was not acquainted. Each and every word of the glorious Qur'ān confirms their religious literature. The more their literature is studied, the more the disclosures of the glorious Qur'ān are confirmed and strange facts come to light. It appears that not one word about them is superfluous or wrong.

The glorious Qur'ān also emphasises the importance of some individuals and incidents and refutes a few because the Jews and Christians had no belief in them. The purpose is to negate their insinuations and narratives. Here are just three examples:

1. The glorious Qur'ān rebuts the charge of "infidelity" against the Prophet Sulaimān (peace be on him):

> *...Solomon disbelieved not, but the devils disbelieved.* [al-Baqarah 2: 102]

An unbiased person may be surprised at the need to refute the charge of infidelity against an illustrious prophet (peace be on

him). However, the office of prophethood demands unflinching faith and a true prophet is a model, an exemplar and an imitable guide. He is the source of *īmān* for his *ummah*. But what the Bible says about the Prophet Sulaimān (peace be on him) as mentioned in the previous pages and the stories about polytheism, idol-worship and the teaching of magic, which were popular among the Jews, and their viewpoint and the historical background which we get from the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* and *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, then the need, importance and merit of refutation of these allegations in the glorious Qur'ān becomes quite clear. The Jews and Christians remain firm in their beliefs (because according to them the source of their belief is the Bible and not the glorious Qur'ān). But they had perforce to retract and admit the truth which an unlettered prophet (peace be on him) said fourteen centuries ago while living in an Arabian desert, away from centres of civilization, which ultimately writers of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (considered to be the culmination of British research) admit:

> Solomon was a sincere worshipper of Yahwe... (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. XX, p. 952. 24 vols. 14th ed. London & New York)

It is clearly stated in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that the verses in the Bible in which the infidelity and polytheism of the Prophet Sulaimān (peace be on him) are mentioned have been added afterwards.

2. The glorious Qur'ān states that after the creation of the skies and earth, the Creator did not get tired and need a rest:

> *And verily We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, in six days and naught of weariness touched Us.* [Qāf 50: 38]

A right-minded person is surprised to read that the Almighty and Omnipotent Allah whose attribute is:

> *...and He is never weary of preserving them...* [al-Baqarah 2: 255]
>
> *...Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him...* [al-Baqarah 2: 255]

needed a rest – the above verses refute that. The Bible says:

> *And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.* [Genesis 2: 2]

On reading the above, we feel the necessity for the clarification which the glorious Qur'ān provides us and we realise that it is a display of ignorance or misunderstanding in which the great seekers of knowledge and guidance have been wandering for thousands of years – this is also the reason why they celebrate the Sabbath and do not work on a Saturday.

3. The glorious Qur'ān has described the beliefs of the Christians about the Prophet Jesus (peace be on him) in three different ways:

> *They indeed have disbelieved who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary...* [al-Mā'idah 5: 17]
>
> *...and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allah...* [at-Tawbah 9: 30]
>
> *And they say: Allah hath taken unto Himself a son. Be He glorified!...* [al-Baqarah 2: 116]
>
> *And they say: Allah hath taken unto Himself a son. Be He glorified!...* [Yūnus 10: 68]
>
> *And they say: The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son. Assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing.* [Maryam 19: 92]

> *And say: Praise be to Allah, Who hath not taken unto Himself a son, and Who hath no partner in the Sovereignty...* [Banī Isrā'īl 17: 111]
>
> *And to warn those who say: Allah hath chosen a son.* [al-Kahf 18: 4]

Is this difference confined to the mode of presentation or are all these verses identical and synonymous in their meaning? Having learned the history of Christian sects and details of their beliefs, we understand the importance of this abstruse difference, especially when we know that there is a sect in Christianity known as "Adoptionist" which does not believe in the normal birth, prophethood and fatherhood of the Prophet Christ (peace be on him). They believe that, God forbid, God adopted him. Then we have to look in awe at the miraculous nature of the glorious Qur'ān that an unlettered Prophet of Arabia (peace be on him) disclosed the truth on the basis of revelation and kept in mind the slight differences about which learned Christians were not aware. Maulānā 'Abdul Mājid in his commentary on the Holy Qur'ān writes:

> The Adoptionists held "that Christ was a mere man miraculously conceived indeed, but adopted as the Son of God only by supreme degree in which he had been fitted with the divine wisdom and power".

All these miraculous facts are outside the grasp of men who do not know the internal events and hidden thoughts. It is the revelation from the Omniscient which is beyond all doubt and suspicion and in which there is no defect nor deficiency.

> *...Lo! It is an unassailable Scripture. Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or from behind it. (It is) a revelation from the Wise, the Owner of Praise.* [Fuṣṣilat/Ḥā Mīm as-Sajdah 41: 41–2]

CHAPTER 5

An Important Prediction of the Glorious Qur'ān

The Victory of the Byzantine Empire

Another aspect of the miracles of the glorious Qur'ān is its predictions – a "miracle" is something extraordinary and astonishing, a manifestation of the Divine Power of Allah, which confirms the prophethood of a prophet and about which the human intellect is unable to explain its cause. It is a miracle in the conditions in which these predictions were made and the way they came to pass. There are two aspects of a miracle in these predictions: one is knowledge and information of these inconceivable and important events under unfavourable conditions; and the other their occurrence exactly according to the predictions. The most distinct and amazing prediction is the victory of the Byzantine Empire. It was predicted in the glorious Qur'ān thus:

> *Alif. Lām. Mīm. The Romans have been defeated in the nearer land, and they, after their defeat, will be victorious within ten years – Allah's is the command in the former case and in the latter – and on that day believers will rejoice in Allah's help to victory. He helpeth to victory whom He will. He is the Mighty, the Merciful. It is a promise of Allah. Allah faileth not His promise, but most of mankind know not. They*

only know some appearances of the life of the world, and are heedless of the Hereafter. [ar-Rūm 30: 1–7]

The mode and context of this prediction shows that it is a miracle of the glorious Qur'ān and the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) and proves the truth of both. This was an unusual and unpredictable event because victory came after utter defeat. That is why it is mentioned twice in the beginning of the verse.

The other miraculous aspect of this event is that it was to take place over a period of nine years which seems quite insufficient for the upward rise of a subjugated empire and a declining nation. It is emphasised in the latter part of the verse that this takes place against all apparent signs and expectations. That is why it is said:

...Allah's is the command in the former case and in the latter... [ar-Rūm 30: 4]

This verse stresses the authority of Allah at all times. It does not take any effort for Him to turn the conqueror into the conquered and bring to life the dead. There is no restriction for Him, nor does He have to wait for favourable circumstances. He makes all these changes day and night:

Say: O Allah! Owner of Sovereignty! Thou givest sovereignty unto whom Thou wilt, and Thou withdrawest sovereignty from whom Thou wilt. Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt. In Thy hand is the good. Lo! Thou art able to do all things. Thou causest the night to pass into the day, and Thou causest the day to pass into the night. And Thou bringest forth the living from the dead, and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living. And Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou choosest, without stint. [Āl 'Imrān 3: 26–7]

This incident was the result of Allah's will and the Muslims, being closer to the Byzantines than the Iranians who used to taunt the Muslims, were happy and jubilant, as they were also saddened by the defeat of the Byzantines.

> *...and on that day believers will rejoice in Allah's help to victory...* [ar-Rūm 30: 4–5]

It is just possible that this is a hint of the Muslims' grand and crucial victory on the battlefield of Badr which took place the same day on which the Byzantines overpowered the Iranians (Ibn Kathīr on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās).

But why should Allah help the Christians? It has been said:

> *...He helpeth to victory whom He will...* [ar-Rūm 30: 5]

His attributes are such that this unusual and amazing incident could occur. It has been said:

> *...He is the Mighty, the Merciful...* [ar-Rūm 30: 5]

Here is manifestation of these two attributes. The Iranians were puffed up with pride over their victory but Allah had mercy on the Byzantines who were vanquished, their empire was disintegrated, fifty thousand were taken prisoner and they were tyrannised. This was good news for the Muslims also as they were grieved over the defeat of the Byzantines at the hands of the Iranians. It was also a prediction of their future victory. It is further emphasised that there will be no reversal of events:

> *...Allah faileth not in His promise...* [ar-Rūm 30: 6]

It is disclosed that this will occur in spite of superficial knowledge and normal experiences. And that is why most

people would not be able to believe such an event before its occurrence and they would not be able to predict it on account of their superficial knowledge:

> ...*They only know some appearances of the life of the world, and are heedless of the Hereafter*. [ar-Rūm 30: 7]

Historical Background

We must now discover what were the unfavourable conditions in which the victory of the Byzantines occurred, why it was considered unthinkable, and why the glorious Qur'ān has given it such importance and presented it as a sign of divine power and truthfulness of the glorious Qur'ān. The freedom of a slave nation or the rise of an oppressed nation are not exceptional nor rare in history, so why has the glorious Qur'ān described it as an extraordinary event?

We must, therefore, look into the circumstances in which this incident took place. The Byzantines were discouraged and oppressed and the Iranians had achieved a grand victory and established their rule, then there was a reversal within nine years – this in itself is extraordinary. The Unseen hand of Allah was working behind history so there can be no rational explanation for it. We answer such events with a statement by a European historian, Edward Gibbon, from his book *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

The Reasons for the Iranian Attack

Chosroes II (who was the son of Hurmuz and grandson of Noshirwan) ran away in fear of Bahram (Gaur), who had usurped the Sassanid Throne after having dethroned Hurmuz, and he took refuge in Constantinople. King Maurice, who reigned there at that time, welcomed the Iranian prince and adopted him as "a son".

King Maurice sent an army under General Narses who rethroned Chosroes on his ancestral throne in 590 AD with the help of the Iranians. Chosroes was under an obligation to him for this kindness and regarded him as his "father". Relations between the Byzantine and Iranian Empires remained friendly for as long as King Maurice lived and he reaped many political and material advantages from such a tie.

An army officer, Phocas, rebelled against the king, ruthlessly murdered him and his family and seized the throne of Constantinople. The new king of Byzantine informed the Iranian king about his enthronement, according to the convention and friendly relations between them, and sent his emissary Lilius to Chosroes. He was the man who had killed King Maurice and his children and presented their heads to Phocas. When Chosroes learned about this, he was very angry and arrested the emissary, refused to recognise the new regime and declared that he would avenge the death of his benefactor and "godfather". This announcement further excited the religious and national prejudices of the Iranian governors and Chosroes attacked Constantinople in 603 AD (seven years before the prophethood of Muḥammad, peace be on him).

The Extent of the Iranian Conquests

Phocas had the Byzantine General Narses burnt at the stake in the market-place in Constantinople. There was no better general than him in the Byzantine Empire. The Assyrian mothers used to mention his name to frighten their children and after his death the Byzantine army was trampled by elephants. Chosroes had already destroyed the Byzantine fortifications. He crossed the Euphrates and captured many cities in Syria, including Hierapolis, Chaleis, Aleppo and Antioch, the capital of the eastern Byzantine Empire.

These conquests were proof of the decline and fall of the Byzantine Empire and the incapacity of Phocas. The Iranians captured Caesaria, capital of Cappadocia, Damascus and after Trans-Jordan occupied Jerusalem, including the burial place of Jesus (according to some Christians) and burnt down the churches of Constantinople and Helena – and thus the oblations (offerings) of three hundred years were destroyed. The Holy Rood was transferred to Iran and ninety thousand Christians were killed.

The Iranians then occupied Egypt and extended their borders to Ethiopia and Tripoli. Byzantine colonies and African-occupied territories were also captured by the Iranians. The Iranian general came via the same route through the Libyan Desert which Alexandra had taken. A contingent of the Iranian army occupied the Bosporus and Chaldea and camped in front of Constantinople for ten years. If Chosroes had had a navy, he would almost certainly have conquered part of Europe.

The Enthronement of Heraclius

When the Byzantine Empire was in the throes of death, the Governor of Africa, Heraclius, rebelled, killed Phocas and took the reins of the fast-declining government. The first news was of the siege of Antioch.

Chosroes' spirit of vengeance might have subsided after the murder of Phocas and he might also have been thankful to Heraclius, who had killed the murderer of his benefactor and usurped the empire. However, he continued his offensive and conquests.

The Difficulties of the Byzantines

The Byzantines were totally subdued by 616 AD and they had lost their vast empire to the Iranians. Besides this, there was a

great outcry in Europe over their sufferings at the hands of the Iranians in the East. The Avars tyrannised them from the borders of Austria to Trapezus (now Trabzon).* It was not long since the blood of innocent people had been shed and prisoners killed in the holy field of Pannonia and women and children made slaves. The Byzantine Empire was confined to Constantinople, part of Greece, Italy, Africa and some parts of the Asian coast from Tyre to Trabzon (Turkey). After the siege of Egypt there was famine and epidemics in the capital because the import of grains had stopped. During the regime of Constantine (in 303 AD), food grains used to be distributed free so that the people might settle in the capital. This system had to be stopped in 618 AD for the first time.

The Behaviour of Heraclius

The biographers of Heraclius agree that there was no change in him after these incidents. He was a silent spectator of the fall of his empire. Gibbon writes:

> Of the characters conspicuous in history, that of Heraclius is one of the most extraordinary and inconsistent. In the first and last years of a long reign the emperor appears to be the slave of sloth, of pleasure, or of superstition; the careless and impotent spectator of the public calamities. (Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. II (395 AD–1185 AD), p. 790. The Modern Library, New York)

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*619 AD. The Avars appeared at Constantinople which was threatened on the Asiatic side by the Persians. Heraclius was deterred from fleeing only by the influence of the Patriarch.

611–622 AD. The Persian Advance: They took Antioch, Apameia, Emesa and Kaisarejs, Damascus (613 AD), Jerusalem (614 AD) which was sacked, the inhabitants and the Holy Cross being transferred to Ctesiphone. In 615 AD the Persians were at Chalcedon. In 619 AD they conquered Egypt. (*Encyclopaedia of World History*, ed. William L. Langer, 5th ed., Vol. I, p. 198)

The Prediction of the Glorious Qur'ān

In 616 AD, when the Byzantine Empire was disintegrating, the glorious Qur'ān predicted that the Byzantines would again come to power within ten years. Gibbon writes:

> ...and in the midst of the Persian triumphs he (Prophet Muḥammad – peace be on him) ventured to foretell that, before many years should elapse, victory would again return to the banners of the Romans. At that time when this prediction is said to have been delivered, no prophecy could be more distant from its accomplishment, since the first twelve years of Heraclius announced the approaching dissolution of the empire. (Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. II (395 AD–1185 AD), p. 788. The Modern Library, New York)

This incident took place in the fifth year of prophethood. The infidels of Makkah were jubilant at Iran's victory and the defeat of the Byzantines. They saw the Iranian victory as being both a victory for their friends and a good omen for themselves, because both nations were unified in polytheism. When they heard about the earlier verses of the glorious Qur'ān, which predicted a Byzantine victory, they thought it impossible and betted with the Muslims that if the Byzantines won, they would give so many camels to the Muslims. If it did not occur, then the Muslims would lose the camels. Abū Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) was also a party to it and he fixed a time of five years for it. When the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) came to know about it, he said, "It means three to nine years. The time limit should be fixed at less than ten years." Abū Bakr, therefore, fixed the term at nine years.

Realisation of the Prediction

Heraclius, overwhelmed by the adversities described above, decided to leave Constantinople and move to the safety of Carthage. Ships were loaded with treasures and the crown jewels and were ready to set sail, but the Patriarch would not allow Heraclius to leave peacefully. He came to St. Sophia and vowed that his life and death would be with the people who had been placed in his charge.

In a discomfited state of mind the Byzantine king sent a delegation consisting of responsible Roman officers under an Iranian leader with a request to forgive him and let him leave in peace. The Iranian king said that it was not a delegation but that the Byzantine king had presented himself fettered before him. He said that he could not forgive the Byzantine king unless he abandoned the worship of the "crucified god" and worshipped the sun (helioltry).

But, on reflecting on the experience of the past six years, he decided to allow Heraclius to leave Constantinople and offered peace on condition that the Byzantine king pay him one thousand talents* of gold, one thousand talents of silver, one thousand garments of silk, one thousand horses and one thousand virgin girls as a tribute every year. These imposed conditions proved very useful to Heraclius in that he was able to excite the Byzantines' sense of honour and zeal and so instigated them to fight. He obtained loans from the Church Endowments and offerings on condition that he would repay with interest.

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*Talent: any of several units of weight (as a unit of Palestine and Syria, equal to 3000 shekels or a Greek unit equal to 6000 drachmas.

Shekel: a Hebrew unit equal to about 252 grains troy.

Drachma: an ancient Greek silver coin equivalent to 6 obds.

Obd: equivalent to one-sixth of a drachma.

Grain: a unit of weight based on the weight of a grain of wheat (1 gr. = 0.0648 gms.)

The Change in Heraclius

There was a new spirit in Heraclius. He was no longer a lax and luxury-seeking king, but a valiant, vigilant and victorious general who was bent on regaining his lost empire. Gibbon writes:

> But the languid mists of the morning and evening are separated by the brightness of the meridian sun: the Arcadius of the palace arose the Caesar of the camp; and the honour of Rome and Heraclius was gloriously retrieved... (Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. V, p. 76)

The Incursions and Victories of Heraclius*

Heraclius left the western and southern coasts of Mesopotamia, landed his army at Alexandria, repaired the sea forts, trained army recruits and unveiled the miraculous portrait of Jesus Christ (peace be on him). He made an impassioned appeal to take revenge on the Iranians. He conquered Cilicia and advanced towards Cappadocia. He scaled the mountains of the

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*Mesopotamia: region of south-west Asia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers extending from the mountains of East Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf. The entire Tigris-Euphrates valley.

Cilicia: ancient country in south-east Asia Minor extending along the Mediterranean coast south of the Taurus mountains.

Cappadocia: ancient district in east Asia Minor chiefly in the valley of the upper Kizil in modern Turkey; capital, Caesarea Mazaca.

Armenia: former kingdom in west Asia in mountainous region, south-east of the Black Sea and south-west of the Caspian Sea (now divided between USSR, Turkey and Iran).

Gandzha: (Kirovabad) city in USSR in western Azerbaidzhan (formerly Gandhza or Ekisavetpol).

Taurus: mountains in south Turkey parallel to Mediterranean coast.

Tauris: or ancient Tauris city north-west of Iran in Azerbaijan.

Lesser Armenia: region in south Turkey corresponding to ancient Cilicia.

Qazwin: or Kazwin – city in north-west Iran, south of the Elburz mountains and north-west of Teheran.

Black Sea and Armenia and entered the heart of Iran. He reached Trabzon with five thousand soldiers from Constantinople and conquered Tauris, Gandzha (Kirovobad) and Mogan. The Christians destroyed the Magi places of worship and burnt the statues of Chosroes. The birth-place of Zoroaster was desecrated in retaliation for the sacrilege of the so-called Sepulcher of Christ and fifty thousand prisoners were released. Heraclius entered Qazwin and Isfahan and the Iranian Empire was threatened. The Iranian army was called back from the Nile Valley and Bosphorus. Heraclius defeated them too. Then he crossed the mountains of Kurdistan and the river Tigris and after much bloodshed reached Sabat. After a decisive battle at Nainava (Nineveh) he entered Dastjard and advanced to within a few miles of Madā'īn. He returned to Constantinople a great conqueror.

Materialisation of the Prediction

The Iranian Empire was in danger. The Byzantine army advanced far ahead of their former boundaries and reached the heartland of Iran, and in this way, the prediction of the glorious Qur'ān was fulfilled in 625 AD.

The Indolence of Heraclius

Writers and historians of Europe agree that the most glorious time in the life of Heraclius is the period in which he fought against the Iranians and won back his empire. There is no congruence with this middle period and his earlier and later life. It appears that Almighty Allah awakened his latent capabilities for the job and on completion of this mission he again became a lax and luxury-seeking Caesar. The provinces which he wrested after great sacrifices and much bloodshed from the Iranians were later overrun by the Arabs.

Historians are perplexed as to the reason for this awakening and capability followed by incapability and neglectfulness. They offer various explanations for these two altogether strange and different periods in his life. Gibbon writes:

> It was the duty of the Byzantine historians to have revealed the causes of his slumber and vigilance. At this distance we can only conjecture that he was endowed with more personal courage than political resolution; that he was detained by the charms, and perhaps the arts, of his niece, Martina, with whom, after the death of Endocia, he contracted an incestuous marriage; and that he yielded to the base advice of the counsellors, which urged, as a fundamental law, that the life of the emperor should never be exposed to the field. Perhaps he was awakened by the last insolent demand of the Persian conqueror. (Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. V, pp. 76–77)

A writer on Heraclius in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states:

> The character of Heraclius is a curious riddle, which is not easy to solve. Personally brave, and possessed of tried ability as a diplomat and a general, in his later years he passively allowed his empire to fall to pieces before his eyes – presenting in the periods of his life a contrast that would almost seem to argue the possession of not merely contrary but contradictory qualities. But we must not forget that our information regarding the inner details of his later reign is very imperfect, and that possibly there may be some reason, though hardly an excuse, for his conduct. It would have been better for his fame if he had died immediately after his Persian campaign. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. XI, p. 682)

European historians admit that there was an inexplicable change in Heraclius in his exploits against the Iranians and he exhibited a fighting spirit which he did not have in other periods of his life.

But these explanations do not hold well and it is a debatable point that Heraclius did not relish fighting against the Muslim armies and the secret of the defeat of the Byzantine forces lies in Muslim power and character rather than the indolence and incapability of Heraclius.

CHAPTER 6

Other Predictions in the Glorious Qur'ān

There are many other predictions besides the conquest of Byzantine. Following are some other predictions of the glorious Qur'ān, examples of which can be seen in history books of the period of the revelation of the glorious Qur'ān.

1. The prediction of the conquest of monotheist and obedient Muslims:

> *Allah hath promised such of you as believe and do good works that He will surely make them succeed (the present rulers) in the earth even as He caused those who were before them to succeed (others); and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He hath approved for them; and will give them in exchange safety after their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe nothing as partners unto Me. Those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the miscreants*. [an-Nūr 24: 55]

2. The rise of emigrants and the prediction of the consequential religious and moral results of their rise to power:

> *Permitted are those who are fought against, because they have been oppressed, and verily to succour them Allah is Potent*. [al-Ḥajj 22: 39]

Those who if We establish them in the earth, shall establish the prayer and give the poor-rate and command that which is reputable and restrain that which is disreputable; and unto Allah is the end of all affairs. [al-Ḥajj 22: 41]

3. The prediction of new converts and gifted Muslims:

O ye who believe! Whoso of you becometh a renegade from his religion, (know that in his stead) Allah will bring a people whom He loveth and who love Him, humble toward believers, stern toward disbelievers, striving in the way of Allah, and fearing not the blame of any blamer. [al-Mā'idah 5: 54]

4. The prediction of Arab apostates and war between Byzantine and Iran:

Say unto those of the wandering Arabs who were left behind: Ye will be called against a folk of mighty prowess, to fight them until they surrender; and if ye obey, Allah will give you a fair reward; but if ye turn away as ye did turn away before, He will punish you with a painful doom. [al-Fatḥ 48: 16]

5. The prediction of the triumph of religion:

Fain would they put out the light of Allah with their mouths; but Allah disdaineth (aught) save that He shall perfect His light, however much the disbelievers are averse. [at-Tawbah 9: 32]

He it is Who hath sent His messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth; that He may cause it to prevail over all religion, however much the idolators may be averse. [at-Tawbah 9: 33]

Fain would they put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah will perfect His light however much the disbelievers are averse. [as-Ṣaff 61: 8]

6. The prediction of the protection of the glorious Qur'ān:

Lo! We, even We, reveal the Reminder, and lo! We verily are its Guardian. [al-Ḥijr 15: 9]

7. The prediction of the collection, propagation and interpretation of the glorious Qur'ān:

Stir not thy tongue herewith to hasten it. Lo! Upon Us (resteth) the putting together thereof and the reading thereof. And when We read it, follow thou the reading. Then lo! Upon Us (resteth) the explanation thereof. [al-Qiyāmah 75: 16–19]

Shāh Waliyyullāh explains the above verse with the following:

"Lo! Upon Us (resteth) the putting together thereof…" It means that collection of the Scripture (the glorious Qur'ān) in book form rests on us and the "reading thereof" means that the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) will recite it continually. Allah asks the Prophet (peace be on him) that he need not worry that he will forget the glorious Qur'ān and he need not strive hard to learn it (by heart) which other Muslims have to do. The recitation of the Archangel Gabriel used to impress it (the glorious Qur'ān) on his mind (*Khāṭir-e-Mubārak*).

Allah said that it is essential for us to collect the glorious Qur'ān in book form and recite it. We hear with rapt attention when we recite it through the Archangel Gabriel. Then the clarification of the glorious Qur'ān is also our responsibility for which we would appoint a team and

guide it with annotation of difficult words and the reason for revelation in every period that it would explain the meanings of the glorious Qur'ān and prove its truth. It is also the task after you have learnt it by heart and preached it. Because the verses of the glorious Qur'ān are complementary and each one confirms the other. The Prophet (peace be on him) is the person to expound the glorious Qur'ān. The promise for "Hifz" of the glorious Qur'ān was fulfilled thus that the Muslims of East and West are endowed with its recitation day and night. This is the meaning of the writing that "water would not wash it out" and the recitation of the glorious Qur'ān has become widespread and exegesis were done later.

8. The Treaty of Ḥudaibiyyah and the triumphant entry into Makkah.

> *Lo! We have given thee (O Muḥammad) a signal victory.* [al-Fatḥ 48: 1]

9. The prediction of spoils (of war) and victories in the future:

> *Allah promiseth you much booty that ye will capture, and hath given you this in advance...* [al-Fatḥ 48: 20]
>
> *And other (gains) which ye have not been able to achieve, Allah will compass it.* [al-Fatḥ 48: 21]

10. Prediction of the entry into the Grand Mosque:

> *...Ye shall indeed enter the inviolable place of worship, if Allah Will, secure (having your hair) shaven and cut, not fearing...* [al-Fatḥ 48: 27]

11. Prediction of the demise of the Prophet Muḥammad and the propagation of Islam:

> *When Allah's succour and the triumph cometh and thou seest mankind entering the religion of Allah in troops...* [an-Naṣr 110: 1–2]

> *Lo! It is thy insulter (and not thou) who is without posterity.* [al-Kawthar 108: 3]

CHAPTER 7

A Miracle of the Glorious Qur'ān is Guidance and Reformation

The parallel of revolutionary change which the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) brought about through the glorious Qur'ān, his prophetic morals and conduct (*Sīrah*) in beliefs, intellectual, spiritual, ethical, psychological and social spheres which was, in fact, the glorious Qur'ān put into practice, is not found in human history either before or after it. It is a miracle of the glorious Qur'ān and it embraces hundreds of other miracles, and each and every individual believer and society which came into being (as a result of its teachings) is a miracle in itself. The history (of mankind) never witnessed such a profound impact in any area or in a group of persons, however limited. It is necessary to compare the prevailing conditions before the advent of Islam and after it and different aspects and facets of this revolution which the religion brought into being. We have to present the intellectual, religious, psychological and moral history of the two periods for that, but it cannot be presented in one book but needs a number of books. The change which the glorious Qur'ān brought about can be assessed from the glorious Qur'ān itself and by comparing the prevailing conditions from the authentic history books of pre-Islamic and post-Islamic periods.

The marvellous aspect of this miracle is that this all-embracing and far-reaching change was brought about without those resources with which we are now equipped and which have generally been used by reformers in their own times, i.e. promotion of education, lessons, teaching, press, writing, compilation, schools and training centres. The glorious Qur'ān itself hints at this wondrous aspect. Sworn enemies became bosom friends, which could not be achieved as the glorious Qur'ān declares if these people had spent large amounts of money:

> *...He it is Who supporteth thee, with His help and with the believers. And (as for the believers) hath attuned their hearts. If thou hadst spent all that is in the earth thou couldst not have attuned their hearts, but Allah hath attuned them. Lo! He is Mighty, Wise.* [al-Anfāl 8: 62–3]

The glorious Qur'ān claims this change for itself at various places and indicates that this change came about through it:

> *He it is Who sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite unto them His revelations and to make them grow; and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom, though heretofore they were indeed in error manifest.* [al-Jumu'ah 62: 2]

It declares at another place:

> *He it is Who sendeth down clear revelations unto His slave that he may bring you forth from darkness into light.* [al-Ḥadīd 57: 9]

> *Alif. Lām. Rā. (This is) a Scripture which We have revealed unto thee (Muḥammad) that thereby thou mayst bring forth mankind from darkness into light.* [Ibrāhīm 14: 1]

The glorious Qur'ān describes the differences between the "age of ignorance" and the post-Islamic period in a particular way:

> *...And remember Allah's favour unto you; how ye were enemies and He made friendship between your hearts so that ye became as brothers by His grace and (how) you were upon the brink of an abyss of fire and He did save you from it. Thus Allah maketh clear His revelations unto you, that haply ye may be guided.* [Āl 'Imrān 3: 103]

> *Is he who was dead and We have raised him unto life, and set for him a light wherein he walketh among men...* [al-An'ām 6: 122]

In fact, no better picture could be drawn than that depicted by the glorious Qur'ān and these two different periods could not be described in a more eloquent way. The entire history of the pre- and post-Islamic eras is elucidated and explained in these two verses.

The introduction of the most advanced man in the "age of ignorance" could not be expressed in a better way than is done by the glorious Qur'ān. If a graphic description of the Islamic revolution, rather a series of revolutions has to be done, it could not be done in a better way than:

> *Is he who was dead and We have raised him unto life, and set for him a light wherein he walketh among men...* [al-An'ām 6: 122]

CHAPTER 8

The Divine Scriptures in the Light of Research and History

The divine scriptures revealed before the glorious Qur'ān were subject to alteration because Allah had not taken responsibility for their protection. They were entrusted to the *'ulamā'* and their followers. Besides, their use was meant for a limited period of time, place and people and as a warning to those who opposed them:

> *Lo! We did reveal the Torah, wherein is guidance and a light, by which the prophets who surrendered (unto Allah) judged the Jews, and the Rabbis and the priests (judged) by such of Allah's Scripture as they were bidden to observe, and thereunto were they witnesses.* [al-Mā'idah 5: 44]

This is a historically proven and now known fact, admitted by the very people who were entrusted with these scriptures. The scriptures of ancient times were subject to destruction. Jewish historians admit that this occurred thrice. First was when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, attacked the Jews in 586 BC and burnt down the "Bait-ul-Maqdis" in which the Prophet Sulaimān (peace be on him) had preserved the tablets of Torah and the relics of the people of Mūsā and Hārūn (peace be on both

of them) and those Jews who were not killed were taken to Babylon as prisoners, where they lived for fifty years and the Prophet 'Uzair (peace be on him) dictated the Pentateuch from memory and recorded events. Then Jeremiah included the Psalms of David.

The second time was when Antiochus IV, a Seleucid king (d. 163 BC), attacked the "Bait-ul-Maqdis" in 168 BC, burnt the holy scriptures and banned the recitation of Torah and Jewish practices. Judas Maccabaeus collected and compiled the holy scriptures again and made a few additions to them.

The third time was when the Roman Emperor Titus (81–40 BC), attacked the "Bait-ul-Maqdis" on 7th September, 70 BC and took the holy scriptures to the Roman capital as a memento, ousted the Jews and settled other people around Jerusalem.

The viewpoint of the Jews about these scriptures is altogether different from that of the Muslims about the glorious Qur'ān. The Muslims believe that it was revealed and every word of it is from Allah and that it is protected from all alterations, inversions and transpositions from the time of revelation until the present. According to the Jews, any alteration to scripture does not affect its divinity. They do not consider the writings of the prophets (peace be on all of them) to be anything other than divine revelation. The following quotations give an idea of the Jewish viewpoint about their beliefs and their scriptures:

> Jewish tradition, while insisting that some Biblical books were composed by the chief actors therein, which is not at all unreasonable, does not hesitate to admit later elaboration and revision of certain books in the Bible. (*Valentine's Jewish Encyclopaedia*, Vol. I, London, p. 93)

> Ancient Jewish tradition attributed the authorship of the Pentateuch (with the exception of the last eight verses describing Moses' death) to Moses himself. But the many

> inconsistencies and seeming contradictions contained in it attracted the attention of the Rabbis, who exercised their ingenuity in reconciling them. (*Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p. 589)
>
> Spinoza in his 'Tractatus Theologico-Politicus' (1671, VIII & IX) goes so far as to attribute the composition of the Pentateuch not to Moses but Ezra… (*Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p. 590)

So far as the four Gospels in the New Testament are concerned, their position is no better than that in the Old Testament. There are many complications, intricacies, doubts and suspicions about their compilation and their compilers. There is a wide gulf between the teachings of Christ (peace be on him) and that of their compilers which is difficult for any scholar or historian to bridge. These Gospels have been altered by different Councils (Synods) and in translation from one language to another. They appear to be books about biographies, travel and stories and may have been corroborated by anyone who had a deep knowledge of the history of the times.

These Gospels do not have the authenticity of the second or third-grade collection of the Traditions (of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be on him), far from being comparable to the six authentic books of *ḥadīth* (*Ṣiḥāḥ Sittah*) as these books have continuous and unbroken chains of narrators from the compilers to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him). The true tradition, according to Muslims, is that which has been recorded with caution and honesty and which is authoritative and contiguous. There is no defect or flaw in the tradition or the narrator. Conversely, the Gospels are devoid of all these details. There are no authentic and continuous records about their compilers, nor is there a continuous record of narrators from them to Christ (peace be on him).

Also, the Gospels are now not in the language in which they were revealed and which was spoken by the followers of Christ (peace be on him). They have been translated from one language to another and have reached us having passed through many translations. That is why, in fact, they are collections of biographies, stories and sermons.

In view of all these facts, it is basically wrong to compare the Gospels with the glorious Qur'ān and to do so reveals lack of knowledge (nescience), since comparisons can only be made between two equals.

A neophyte Muslim French Orientalist, Eaton Dien, has written about the introduction of these Gospels and tried to ascertain their scientific position and historicity:

> There is the least doubt that the Gospel given by God to Jesus Christ and his people has been lost. No trace of the original revelation remains now; it became extinct or was destroyed on purpose. That is why the Christians have accepted four Gospels in place of one, but their historical character and authenticity is very doubtful. The earliest copies of the Gospel are in Greek which is not allied to the Semitic language, spoken by Jesus Christ, and this explains why the rapport between the Greek Gospels and their herald is very feeble in comparison to the Bible of the Jews or the Qur'ān of the Arabs. (*Islamic Concept of Prophethood*, p. 176)

The internal evidence of the Bible also hints at historical aberrations, manifest contradictions and inconceivable matters; for example, it associates such "things" with Allah which are against His Sublimity and Splendour in accordance with His Attributes (*ṣifāt*) and over which there is unanimity in all the revealed religions and which sound wisdom accepts. There are allegations against prophets (peace be on all of them) of which

common man is not even supposed to be guilty. The contents of the Old and New Testaments (which constitute the Holy Bible) show that additions and alterations have been made.

This is the story of those holy Books in which their adherents believe and the two most civilised nations (Jews and Christians) are their staunch protagonists and followers. Islam and Muslims recognise them as the "People of the Book".

The periods of *Rig-Ved* (of India) and of Avasta of Iran are lost in antiquity and their historical evidence is so scarce that it is difficult to fathom their real meaning and purpose. They were also subjected to such historical mishaps through history that their authenticity has become still more doubtful. Moreover, it is difficult to fix their period (as to when they were compiled) and as such it is all the more difficult to say anything about them.

A. Barth, Member, Royal Asiatic Society, Paris, writes in his book *The Religions of India* about the origin of Indian Sacred Scripture:

> If we accept a certain quantity of appended matter which criticism has no difficulty in discriminating from the genuine work, we have in these writings, as a whole, an authentic literature which professes to be what it is, which neither asserts by itself a supernatural origin nor seeks to disguise its age by recourse to the devices of pasticcio. Interpolations and later additions are numerous enough, but these have all been made in good faith. It is nevertheless difficult to fix the age of these books even in any proximate degree. The most recent portions of the Brahmanas which have come down to us do not appear to go further than the fifth century before our era. The rest of the literature of the Vedas must be referred to a remote antiquity, and assigned, in a sequence impossible to determine with any precision, a duration, the first term of which it is absolutely impossible for us to recover. (pp. 4–5)

Another scholar, Suresh Chandra Chakravarti, Lecturer, Calcutta University, in *Philosophy of the Upanishads* writes:

> The two extreme views are represented by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and by Max Muller. Tilak thinks that the Vedic hymns are as old as 4500 B.C. Max Muller could not give Rig-Ved an earlier date than 2200 B.C. though he freely admits that Rig-Ved consists of the earliest record of Aryan Thought…Without making any attempt to fix the age of Rig-Ved, it can be safely said that, although the different hymns of the Rig-Veda have been placed together in one Samhita, the component parts of the Rig-Veda cannot be taken to have been composed at one and the same time, and therefore no particular historical date can be fixed as to the age of Rig-Veda. It will have to be admitted that the hymns of Rig-Veda, from the beginning to the end, must have taken numerous centuries to compose. (pp. 24–6)

The fundamental thought of the Vedas has been described thus by the renowned scholar and (former) President of India, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan:

> The general conception of the Vedas were neither definite nor detailed, and so allowed themselves to be handled and fashioned in different ways by different schools of thought. Besides, the very vastness of the Vedas, from which the authors could select out of free conviction any portion of their authority, allowed room for original thought. (*Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, London, 1927, pp. 21–2)

We give below an excerpt by an eminent Orientalist, Robert H. Pfeiffer, former Head, Department of Semitic Languages, Harvard University, about "Osta" (Avesta) which is considered divine by the Parsees:

> The original Avesta (according to tradition) comprised all knowledge and was destroyed for the most part by Alexander. Out of its remnants, a work of 21 volumes (or nasks) was prepared in the 3rd century A.D. but only one nask (Vendidad) survives complete; the 'Dinkard' (in Pahalvi) gives a list of others. After the 9th century, only the parts dealing with the worship were taken to India, and are extant in five parts: Yasna (including the Gathas), Vispered, Vendidad, Yashta and Kurda Avesta. (*An Encyclopaedia of Religions*, New York, 1945, p. 49)

But the glorious Qur'ān, which is the last of the revealed Books, confirms and protects all other revealed books and over which rests the responsibility of guidance of mankind and the correct relationship between the Creator and the created from the time of the prophethood of Muḥammad (peace be on him) until Doomsday. The position of this Book is altogether different from all others. Allah has the responsibility for its protection from all sorts of inversion, addition or alteration:

> *...Lo! It is an unassailable Scripture. Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or from behind it. (It is) a revelation from the Wise, the Owner of Praise.* [Fuṣṣilat/Ḥā Mīm as-Sajdah 41: 41–2]

It has been protected from all corruption, accretion and mutilation, all of which happened in the case of the New Testament:

> *Lo! We, even We, reveal the Reminder, and lo! We verily are its Guardian.* [al-Ḥijr 15: 9]

This promise of protection includes memorisation of the glorious Qur'ān, propagation, recitation, correct interpretation

and prevents it from becoming obsolete, impractical and unintelligible. The Arabic (*ḥifẓ*) is very comprehensive and deep.

When Allah decided to keep the glorious Qur'ān intact (the way it was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad – peace be on him), He engaged pious men, and natural and external means for this task. The moment the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) recited any new verse, the Companions memorised it. Their love of the glorious Qur'ān was a predominant factor. The miracle, eloquence and mildness of the words of the glorious Qur'ān were also responsible. Besides, the Muslims were dependent on the glorious Qur'ān for their prayers, law, culture, social order and literature. The result of this was that the Muslims had a deep attachment for the glorious Qur'ān and many of the earlier Muslims memorised it. In the incident of "Bīr Ma'ūnah", which took place in the third year of *Hijrah*, seventy Muslims were martyred who had learnt the glorious Qur'ān by heart and were specialists in different branches related to it. In the same way, the fondness for and the number of persons who learnt the glorious Qur'ān by heart has been increasing with the passage of time and this amazing phenomenon continues in all Muslim societies, big and small. Muslims have been transmitting it from one generation to another and scholars have been translating it from one language to another. They vie with one another in memorising, recitation and attaining perfection. They have such affection for it as is difficult for other people to believe. Of course, those non-Muslims who live in Muslim localities and have contact with Muslims can realise the truth of it to some extent. Those who memorise it have not been counted, but during the present times they number many thousands.

Allah invited the attention of the Companions and responsible persons by inspiration when many "*ḥuffāẓ*" (those who had learnt the glorious Qur'ān by heart) were lost in the Battle of Yamāmah. 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) was the first to realise the need to put it down in writing. He, therefore, approached Abū Bakr

(may Allah be pleased with him), who was the Caliph at that time, to compile and write the glorious Qur'ān which was inscribed on pieces of leather, bark and white (soft) stones and was memorised by the Companions of the Prophet (peace be on him). Allah "opened the heart" of Abū Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) and he placed the responsibility for this stupendous task on Companion Zaid ibn Thābit (may Allah be pleased with him), who discharged his onerous duties with painstaking care and thoroughness and compiled it with the assistance of "*ḥuffāẓ*" and scribes of "*waḥy*" and other recorded material. Thus, the glorious Qur'ān came to be written and remains at the centre of confidence and cynosure for Muslims today. When the third Caliph, 'Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with him) took charge, and with conquests made beyond Arab domains, the "*ḥāfiẓ*" and "*Qārī*" migrated there. The people at those places accepted the "manner of recitation" (*Qirā'at*) of these people. There was, however, differences in the accent and mode of non-Arabs. The Companions were apprehensive about making alterations in the recitation of the glorious Qur'ān; then 'Uthmān had Abū Bakr's "*muṣḥaf*" (collection) transcribed and provided one copy of the glorious Qur'ān in all Islamic countries and placed one in safe custody in Madīnah which was named "*Imām*". Muslims accepted these transcribed glorious Qur'āns as authentic in East and West (in all parts of the Muslim world) and the succeeding generations remained firm in their knowledge. They learnt it by heart, recited it in their prayers and even today the 'Uthmanic copy (facsimile) is accepted as authentic throughout the Muslim world. From the time the last 'Uthmanic facsimile was transcribed in 25 *Hijrī*, nobody has disagreed with it nor any new version been discovered in any archaeological museum or library. There has been complete agreement over Abū Bakr's compilation (*tadwīn*) ever since. The glorious Qur'ān is absolutely safe from inversion on account of the number of "*ḥuffāẓ*" and publications. It has been accepted by the editors of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* as:

> The most widely-read book in existence. (*Enc. Brit.*, Vol. XV, 11th ed., p. 898)

Although Orientalists and European scholars do not believe the glorious Qur'ān to be a divine book revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him), they agree with the theory mentioned above. Here I would like to quote a few Christian scholars. Sir William Muir, known for his anti-Islamic stance and Sir Syed Ahmed, Founder of Aligarh Muslim University, wrote *Khuṭbāt-e-Aḥmadīyah* in refutation of Muir's *Life of Mahomet*. Muir writes in his book:

> Contending and embittered factions, taking their rise in the murder of Othman himself within a quarter of a century from the death of Mahomet, have ever since rent the Mahometan world. Yet, but the Coran has been current amongst them; and the consentaneous use by them all in every age up to the present day of the same Scripture, is an irrefragable proof that we have now before us the very text prepared by command of the unfortunate Caliph (his words). There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text. The various readings are wonderfully few in number, and are chiefly confined to difference in the vowel points and diacritical signs. But those marks were invented at a later date. (*Life of Mahomet*, London, 1912, Vol. I, pp. XXII–XXIII)

> The text of the Qur'ān is the purest of all the works of a like antiquity. (Wherry, *Commentary on the Qur'ān*, Vol. I, p. 349)

> Othman's recension has remained the authorised text… from the time it was made until the present day. (Palmer, *The Qur'ān*, int. p. LIX)

> It is an immense merit in the Kuran that there is no doubt as to its genuineness…That very word we can now read with full confidence that it has remained unchanged through nearly thirteen hundred years. (Lane and Lane-Pool's *Selections from the Kuran*, Trubner, London)

In view of these indisputable facts, there was no need for any prophethood in Islam which would bring to an end doubts and suspicions, differentiate between right and wrong and refute any lies, nor was there any need to replace the cancelled book which was altered or amended.

CHAPTER 9

The Pre-Condition for Profiting from the Glorious Qur'ān

The addressee of the glorious Qur'ān is the whole of mankind. In the same way that different tracts of land are affected by rainwater according to their capacity (physical condition) to retain it, and the way wholesome food produces different effects with different persons, the address of the glorious Qur'ān is the same for all men but the capacity to profit from it differs.

Allah has described this different effect of the glorious Qur'ān and the two contradictory results side by side:

> *And We reveal of the Qur'ān that which is a healing and a mercy for believers though it increases the evil-doers in naught save ruin.* [Banī Isrā'īl 17: 82]

> *...Say unto them (O Muḥammad): For those who believe it is a guidance and a healing; and as for those who disbelieve, there is a deafness in their ears, and it is blindness for them. Such are called to from afar.* [Fuṣṣilat/Ḥā Mīm as-Sajdah 41: 44]

> *And whenever a sūrah is revealed there are some of them who say: Which one of you hath thus increased in faith? And for those who believe, it hath increased them in faith and they rejoice (therefore). But as for those in whose hearts is disease, it only addeth wickedness to their*

wickedness, and they die while they are disbelievers. [at-Tawbah 9: 124–5]

Lo! Allah disdaineth not to coin the similitude even of a gnat or of aught above it. Those who believe know that it is the Truth from their Lord; but those who disbelieve say: What doth Allah wish (to teach) by such a similitude? He misleadeth many thereby, and He guideth many thereby; and He misguideth thereby only miscreants. [al-Baqarah 2: 26]

The different effect of certain verses on both believers and disbelievers has also been described as follows. It has been said about believers:

...a guidance unto those who ward off (evil). Who believe in the Unseen, and establish worship, and spend of that We have bestowed upon them. [al-Baqarah 2: 2–3]

They only are the (true) believers whose hearts feel fear when Allah is mentioned, and when His revelations are recited unto them they increase their faith, and who trust in their Lord. [al-Anfāl 8: 2]

Allah hath (now) revealed the fairest of statements, a Scripture consistent, (wherein promises of reward are) paired (with threats of punishment), whereat doth creep the flesh of those who fear their Lord so that their flesh and their hearts soften to Allah's reminder. Such is Allah's guidance wherewith He guideth whom He Will. And him whom Allah sendeth astray, for him there is no guide. [az-Zumar 39: 23]

And about disbelievers:

And when Our revelations are recited unto them, thou knowest the denial in the faces of those who disbelieve; they

> *all but attack those who recite Our revelations unto them.* [al-Ḥajj 22: 72]
>
> *And when Allah alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter, are repelled.* [az-Zumar 39: 45]
>
> *And whenever a sūrah is revealed, they look one at another (as who should say): Doth anybody see us? Then they turn away. Allah turneth away their hearts because they are a folk who understand not.* [at-Tawbah 9: 127]

The glorious Qur'ān has not confined itself to this description alone but also mentions the ability of the believers to profit from it, its effect on them and also the inability to understand and the wayward behaviour of disbelievers towards it.

It also describes the conflicting beliefs and deeds, morals and manners of the believers and disbelievers which shows the different conduct towards the glorious Qur'ān and its definite effect on the outcome. We can determine preconditions and precautions for profiting from the glorious Qur'ān. We can also identify the type of morals and disposition which are consistent with the glorious Qur'ān, which are helpful in understanding it and those which are against it and work as an impediment towards understanding it and, thus, the desired results are not obtained. They are described in the next chapter under different headings.

CHAPTER 10

Impediments in the Way of Profiting From the Glorious Qur'ān

The glorious Qur'ān describes the impediments in the way of profiting from it by non-believers and the beliefs and morals which act as a deterrent to the spiritual and reformist changes which it ought to bring. If these drawbacks are found in the "believers" too, then they also cannot profit from the glorious Qur'ān.

1. Pride

Pride, a false sense of dignity and conceit are drawbacks which often stand in the way of following the teachings of the prophets (peace be on all of them) and thus deprive such persons of their blessings. Sometimes this defiance is the result of not accepting the truth because it means relinquishing their high position, discord, self-invented rites and rituals and mundane interests. They live a life regulated according to its laws instead of "free-living". These (reformist) changes are very difficult for some people to bear and their pride incites them to deny the glorious Qur'ān:

> *I shall turn away from My revelations those who magnify themselves wrongfully in the earth; and if they see each*

token, believe it not, and if they see the way of righteousness, choose it not (their) way, and if they see the way of error, choose it for (their) way. That is because they deny Our revelations and are used to disregard them. [al-A'rāf 7: 146]

Woe unto each sinful liar who heareth the revelations of Allah recited unto him, and then continueth in pride as though he heard them not. Give him tidings of a painful doom. [al-Jāthiyah 45: 7–8]

Then turned he away in pride. [al-Muddaththir 74: 23]

Sometimes the outward condition and poverty of the Prophet (peace be on him) stands in the way of accepting his teachings and proud people feel slighted in following him. The Pharaoh said:

I am surely better than this fellow, who is despicable and can hardly make (his meaning) plain! Why, then, have armlets of gold not been set upon him or angels sent along with him? [az-Zukhruf 43: 52–3]

The disbelievers among the Quraysh said:

And they say: If only this Qur'ān had been revealed to some great man of the two towns. [az-Zukhruf 43: 31]

Sometimes the humanness of the prophets (peace be on all of them) stands in the way of accepting their teachings:

That was because their messengers (from Allah) kept coming unto them with clear proofs (of Allah's Sovereignty), but they said: Shall mere mortals guide us! So they disbelieved and turned away, and Allah was independent (of them). Allah is Absolute, Owner of Praise. [at-Taghābun 64: 6]

> *And they say: What aileth this messenger (of Allah) that he eateth food and walketh in the markets? Why is not an angel sent down unto him, to be a warner with him.* [al-Furqān 25: 7]

Sometimes the economic condition and the professions of the followers of the prophets (peace be on all of them) act as stumbling blocks. The disbelievers advance the excuse of their inferior lineage and consider it beneath their dignity to join them:

> *The chieftains of his folk who disbelieved said: We see thee but a mortal like us, and we see not that any follow thee save the most abject among us, without reflection. We behold in you no merit above us – nay, we deem you liars.* [Hūd 11: 27]

At times the cause of their hesitation is their prosperity and good fortune and they consider themselves to be entitled to everything worth possessing in the world and do not consider that anything which they do not own first can be of any value:

> *And those who disbelieve say of those who believe: If it had been (any) good they would not have been before us in attaining it. And since they will not be guided by it, they say: This is an ancient lie.* [al-Aḥqāf 46: 11]

This is the reason why sometimes persons of high position accuse the prophets (peace be on all of them) of falsehood and such persons are very active and in the forefront in opposing their teachings:

> *And We sent not unto any township a warner, but its pampered ones declared: Lo! We are disbelievers in that wherewith ye have been sent.* [Sabā' 34: 34]

> *And thus have We made in every city great ones of its wicked ones, that they should plot therein...* [al-An'ām 6: 123]

In essence, pride for any reason and in any form stands in the way of profiting from the glorious Qur'ān. The conditions for profiting from the glorious Qur'ān are: accepting its teachings totally and following them, and acknowledging it as a "guide" in all walks of life, and humility (*tawāḍu'*), acceptance (*taslīm*), consent (*riḍā'*) and sacrifice (*īthār*).

> *But nay, by thy Lord, they will not believe (in truth) until they make thee judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which thou decidest, and submit with full submission.* [an-Nisā' 4: 65]

2. Disputation (*Mujādalah*)

Disputation about the glorious Qur'ān without prior knowledge, and wrangling and sophistry are attempts to overcome it by verbiage and glibness and conjecture (about the glorious Qur'ān); all this deprives such persons of profiting from it and suggests hidden pride in the heart:

> *Lo! Those who wrangle concerning the revelations of Allah without a warrant having come unto them, there is naught else in their breasts save pride which they will never attain. So take thou refuge in Allah. Lo! He, only He, is the Hearer, the Seer.* [al-Mu'min 40: 56]

> *But those who strive against Our revelations, challenging (Us), theirs will be a painful doom of wrath.* [Sabā' 34: 5]

> *Those who wrangle concerning the revelations of Allah without any warrant that hath come unto them, it is greatly*

hateful in the sight of Allah and in the sight of those who believe. Thus doth Allah print on every arrogant, disdainful heart. [al-Mu'min 40: 35]

Thus have We appointed unto every prophet an adversary – devils of humankind and jinn who inspire in one another plausible discourse through guile… [al-An'ām 6: 112]

3. Denial of the Coming World and Worldliness

Denial of the "coming world" is a great stumbling block among disbelievers to profiting from the glorious Qur'ān. This is because an important factor among the teachings of the glorious Qur'ān is reward and punishment in the coming world. It speaks of chastisement, promise and reward in the coming world, and provides the necessary information and guidance and details the different stages about the world to come. That is why those persons who are hopeful about it cannot do without the glorious Qur'ān. It says about such people:

…Those who believe in the Hereafter believe herein, and they are careful of their worship. [al-An'ām 6: 92]

But those who deny it, or do not deny it as part of belief but are worldly minded and their point of view in the affairs of the world is totally materialist, the glorious Qur'ān has little or no effect on them:

And when thou recitest the Qur'ān We place between thee and those who believe not in the Hereafter a hidden barrier. And We place upon their hearts veils lest they should understand it, and in their ears a deafness; and when thou makest mention of thy Lord alone in the Qur'ān, they turn their backs in aversion. [Banī Isrā'īl 17: 45–6]

Lo! Those who disbelieve the revelations of Allah, Allah guideth them not and theirs will be a painful doom. [an-Naḥl 16: 104]

...But as for those who believe not in the Hereafter their hearts refuse to know, for they are proud. [an-Naḥl 16: 22]

Then withdraw (O Muḥammad) from him who fleeth from Our remembrance and desireth but the life of the world. Such is their sum of knowledge. Lo! Thy Lord is Best Aware of him who strayeth, and He is Best Aware of him who goeth right. [an-Najm 53: 29–30]

The predominance of materiality creates such deficiency in intellect that the mind of such persons does not think about spiritual matters and as such they deny them:

Lo! Those who expect not the meeting with Us but desire the life of the world and feel secure therein, and those who are neglectful of Our revelations. [Yūnus 10: 7]

Nay, but doth their knowledge reach to the Hereafter? Nay, for they are in doubt concerning it. Nay, for they cannot see it. [an-Naml 27: 66]

Another factor is to argue about those verses in the glorious Qur'ān which are open to various interpretations and then misguide others. The reason behind this is evil intent and perversion of the mind. The glorious Qur'ān says about such persons:

He it is Who hath revealed unto thee (O Muḥammad) the Scripture wherein are clear revelations – they are the substance of the Book – and others (which are) allegorical. But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue forsooth, that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it. [Āl 'Imrān 3: 7]

CHAPTER 11

Qualities Which Help in Understanding the Glorious Qur'ān

1. Desire

The first condition that is necessary to profit from the glorious Qur'ān is desire (*ṭalab*). The person who has no desire to learn cannot be helped by the glorious Qur'ān. The "way" with Allah is that He grants anything when desired. Desire has great value with Him. The desire to improve, dissatisfaction and discontent with present conditions and the desire for truth are preconditions for the right direction; first is repentance (*inābat*) and the second is the desire for positive change:

> *...and guideth unto Himself all who turn (toward Him).* [ar-Ra'd 13: 27]

> *...and guideth unto Himself him who turneth (toward Him).* [ash-Shūrā 42: 13]

> *...Lo! Allah changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts...* [ar-Ra'd 13: 11]

Indifference and self-sufficiency in religion are signs of deprivation and adversity:

> *...So they disbelieved and turned away, and Allah was independent (of them). Allah is Absolute, Owner of Praise.* [at-Taghābun 64: 6]

> *O mankind! Ye are the poor in your relation to Allah. And Allah! He is the Absolute, the Owner of Praise.* [al-Fāṭir 35: 15]

The glorious Qur'ān says of those who have no desire for religion, nor are they attracted to it:

> *...But canst thou make the deaf to hear even though they apprehend not?* [Yūnus 10: 42]

> *...But canst thou guide the blind even though they see not?* [Yūnus 10: 43]

> *Lo! Thou canst not make the dead to hear, nor canst thou make the deaf to hear the call when they have turned to flee. Nor canst thou lead the blind out of their error. Thou canst make none to hear, save those who believe Our revelations and who have surrendered.* [an-Naml 27: 80–1]

2. Hearing and Obeying

The glorious Qur'ān is a Book of guidance and the first condition that is necessary to profit from it is to hear it with attention. A person who does not hear it cannot act upon it:

> *...Therefore give good tidings (O Muḥammad) to My bondmen who hear advice and follow the best thereof. Such are those whom Allah guideth and such are men of understanding.* [az-Zumar 39: 17–18]

But hearing with attention is not sufficient, as the part which is workable is practice. Knowledge without deed is a mental

luxury, which is why following what has been read or heard is an absolute necessity.

3. Fear

The basis of the glorious Qur'ān is God-consciousness and fear. The person who does not fear Allah and has no appeal in His Name is not really religious – it is as if he is without religious feelings and, when anybody has no feeling about anything, he cannot perceive or understand. The glorious Qur'ān profits those who have a feeling for Allah and a deep sense of love is embedded in their hearts. But those who are cold towards the glorious Qur'ān and hear it with inattention do not receive any warmth of faith from the glorious Qur'ān:

> *...But warn by the Qur'ān him who feareth My threat.* [Qāf 50: 45]
>
> *Thou warnest only him who followeth the Reminder and feareth the Beneficent in secret...* [Yā Sīn 36: 11]
>
> *He will heed who feareth.* [al-A'lā 87: 10]
>
> *...Then woe unto those whose hearts are hardened against remembrance of Allah...* [az-Zumar 39: 22]

4. Belief in the Unseen

A considerable part of religion is that which is outside the five senses and intellect. They are the realities of religion which cannot be perceived with the senses as they cannot be touched, smelt or tasted, and intellect too is of no avail. The intellect works on the basis of senses and knowledge and infers about unknown and unperceived realities through experience. When knowledge of certain realities may not be possible through senses and

experience, their elements are not known, and there are no grounds for guesswork, then how can the intellect help?

The Attributes (*ṣifāt*) of Allah, revelation (*waḥy*), angels, the coming world, Paradise and Hell are beyond the realm of the intellect. They belong to the realm of the "unseen" for which the prophets (peace be on all of them) have to be believed and what they say has to be accepted totally – this is faith in the Unseen. Those who are bound by their perceptions and materialism for their faith and belief, and deny whatever their intellect and conjecture cannot comprehend, are not aware of the realities of religion. It is difficult for them to enter the bounds of religion. They cannot profit from the glorious Qur'ān. They encounter difficulties in understanding the glorious Qur'ān at every step. But those persons who do not live by their senses, and consider the range of possibilities extensive and do not consider them to be confined to perceptions and "things existing" (*mawjūdāt*), know the realities of religion and that revelation is the source of true and final knowledge. They have complete faith in the teachings of the prophets (peace be on all of them) and they find no difficulty in understanding and following them. Their religion is a well-known reality and the glorious Qur'ān is a complete guide for them:

> *...a guidance unto those who ward off (evil), who believe in the Unseen...* [al-Baqarah 2: 2–3]

> *...Those who believe know that it is the truth from their Lord; but those who disbelieve say: What doth Allah wish (to teach) by such a similitude? He misleadeth many thereby, and He guideth many thereby; and He misguideth thereby only miscreants.* [al-Baqarah 2: 26]

Those who are overcome with materialism (*māddiyat*) and depend on their senses and try to unravel the realities of religion (which are beyond the intellect) without "faith in the Unseen" are

like a person who wishes to climb without stairs or fly without wings. The higher such persons try to fly, the further their materialism and base practices drag them down. The glorious Qur'ān has described such persons as:

> *And whomsoever it is Allah's Will to guide, He expandeth his bosom unto the surrender (al-Islam) and whomsoever it is His Will to send astray, He maketh his bosom close and narrow as if he were engaged in sheer ascent. Thus Allah layeth ignominy upon those who believe not.* [al-An'ām 6: 125]

5. Contemplation

Contemplation is another condition for profiting from the glorious Qur'ān. It invites the reader to contemplate on its verses at several places and praises the true believers who recite it with understanding and do not follow it like the blind and deaf:

> *And those who, when they are reminded of the revelations of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat.* [al-Furqān 25: 73]

> *Will they then not meditate on the Qur'ān, or are there locks on their hearts?* [Muḥammad 47: 24]

> *Will they not then ponder on the Qur'ān? If it had been from other than Allah they would have found therein much incongruity.* [an-Nisā' 4: 82]

6. Endeavour (*Mujāhadah*)

Endeavour in some form is necessary in contemplation and understanding of the glorious Qur'ān. The glorious Qur'ān is not a "man-made" work where the reader can comprehend the subject of the book and intention of the author through his

knowledge and intellect. The Will and Favour of Allah are necessary to understand the intention of Allah. When a person strives hard and practises good morals and purifies his soul (*tazkiyah*), then the Mercy of Allah favours him and Allah "opens" his heart and imparts understanding (*fahm*) of the glorious Qur'ān. Because it is subtle (*laṭīf*), the less one has of materialism, the more suitable he becomes for it and its grandeur becomes manifest to him:

> *As for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our paths, and lo! Allah is with the good.* [al-'Ankabūt 29: 69]

The other reason is that when a man endeavours (*mujāhadah*) for a definite purpose and makes sacrifices for it, then its charm (*kaifiyat*) overpowers him and he receives its real taste and gains pleasure out of reciting it.

The third point is that the major portion of the glorious Qur'ān is "practical" and cannot be understood in a theoretical way. One may receive the knowledge of the words on a superficial level, but real truth and insight cannot be known without practice.

7. Respect and Regard

To profit, obtain guidance and benefit, to brighten the heart and provide food for the soul, it is necessary to keep in mind that the glorious Qur'ān is not merely a book of knowledge or a collection of rules and regulations, which can be read any way one likes and one can still fully comprehend its subject matter and contents. It is the Word of God (Allah), the King of Kings and whose attributes are:

> *He is Allah, than Whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper of Faith,*

> *the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb...* [al-Ḥashr 59: 23]

and He has said about the glorious Qur'ān:

> *If We had caused this Qur'ān to descend upon a mountain, thou (O Muḥammad) verily hadst seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of Allah. Such similitudes coin We for mankind that haply they may reflect.* [al-Ḥashr 59: 21]

> *On honoured leaves, exalted, purified, (set down) by scribes, noble and righteous.* ['Abasa 80: 13–16]

> *That (this) is indeed a noble Qur'ān, in a Book kept hidden, which none toucheth save the purified.* [al-Wāqi'ah 56: 77–9]

The natural result is that those persons who adapt to it (the glorious Qur'ān), and have some knowledge of Allah who has revealed it, cannot but be impressed by it.

> *...And when His revelations are recited unto them they increase their faith, and who trust in their Lord.* [al-Anfāl 8: 2]

> *Allah hath (now) revealed the fairest of statements, a Scripture consistent (wherein promises of reward are) paired (with threats of punishment) whereat doth creep the flesh of those who fear their Lord, so that their flesh and their hearts soften to Allah's reminder. Such is Allah's guidance, wherewith He guideth whom He will. And him whom Allah sendeth astray, for him there is no guide.* [az-Zumar 39: 23]

> *Those unto whom We have given the Scripture, who read it with the right reading, those believe in it. And whoso*

disbelieveth in it, those are they who are the losers. [al-Baqarah 2: 121]

They read it with the respect with which the writings of a king or the message of a beloved is read.

The study of two other sources is useful in this respect: the Traditions of the Prophet (peace be on him) from the authentic collection in which the superiority and excellence of the glorious Qur'ān is described. Second is the reading of anecdotes from the lives of the Companions of the Prophet, the *imāms*, the casuists (*mujtahid*), great scholars and saint-sages, in which their love for the glorious Qur'ān, their respect and regard for it and the deep impact the recitation of the glorious Qur'ān had over them is described.

A few such anecdotes are given in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 12

Anecdotes About the Recitation and Contemplation of the Glorious Qur'ān

A few anecdotes are described below from the lives of the Companions of the Prophet (may Allah be pleased with them all), their immediate followers (*tābi'īn*), *imāms*, scholars and exalted saint-sages – from which their love for the glorious Qur'ān, their respect and regard for it and their delight in its recitation can be observed.

'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that one day the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) asked him to recite the glorious Qur'ān. He was surprised at this request and asked: "Do you want me to recite it to you when it has been revealed to you?" The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) said: "Yes, I want to hear it from some other person." He started reciting Sūrah an-Nisā'. When he reached the verse:

> *But how (will it be with them) when We bring of every people a witness, and We bring thee (O Muḥammad) a witness against them.* [an-Nisā' 4: 41]

and raised his head, he saw tears flowing from the eyes of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him).

Abū Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) related that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) read and repeated the following verse for a whole night:

> *If Thou dost punish them, they are Thy servants: If Thou dost forgive them, Thou art the Exalted in power, the Wise.* [al-Mā'idah 5: 118]

'Ā'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) relates that Abū Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) was very tender-hearted. When he recited the glorious Qur'ān tears would flow from his eyes.

Abū Rāfi' (may Allah be pleased with him) says that one day he was offering *Fajr* prayers behind 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him). He was in the last row. 'Umar used to recite aloud and recited Sūrah Yūsuf. When he came to the verse:

> *...and I expose my distress and anguish only unto Allah...* [Yūsuf 12: 86]

he began to sob and I could hear him sobbing from the last row.

Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (may Allah have mercy on him) says that 'Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with him) used to recite the whole of the glorious Qur'ān in a "*rak'ah*" in one night, standing.

Imām Aḥmad (may Allah have mercy on him) relates that Uthmān (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say that if your hearts are "purified," then you will never be content with the reciting of the glorious Qur'ān. I do not wish that I pass a single day in my life in which I do not read some of the glorious Qur'ān (looking into it). When he was martyred he was reciting the glorious Qur'ān. It was torn in places through excessive use.

'Alī (may Allah be pleased with him) was so engrossed in recitation of the glorious Qur'ān when the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) had passed away, that he did not leave his house for many days.

Anecdotes have been recorded in the books of Traditions and biographies about the sobbing and crying of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, 'Abdur Raḥmān ibn 'Awf (may Allah be pleased with them all), the distinguished Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) and many eminent *tābi'īn* such as Sa'īd ibn Jubair, Mālik ibn Anas, etc.

It has been said about Zurārah ibn Awfā that he was leading the prayers in the Grand Mosque and, when he recited the following verse of Sūrah al-Muddaththir, he fell dead:

> *For when the trumpet shall sound, surely that day will be a day of anguish, not of ease, for disbelievers.* [al-Muddaththir 74: 8–10]

Bahz ibn Ḥakīm said: I was among the people who carried him to his house.

Khulaid was praying and when he reached the following verse:

> *Every soul will taste of death. And ye will be paid on the Day of Resurrection only that which ye have fairly earned.* [Āl 'Imrān 3: 185]

he kept repeating it. Then somebody from a corner of his house called out to ask how long he would keep repeating this verse as many persons were becoming restless.

Ḥamzah, the slave of Asmā' (daughter of Abū Bakr, may Allah be pleased with them both) says that when she recited the following verse of Sūrah aṭ-Ṭūr:

> *But Allah hath been gracious unto us and hath preserved us from the torment of the breath of Fire*. [aṭ-Ṭūr 52: 27]

she sent him to the market. When he came back she was still reciting the same verse.

Tamīm ad-Dārī (may Allah be pleased with him) came to 'Maqām Ibrāhīm (in the Grand Mosque in Makkah) one night and started reciting Sūrah al-Jāthiyah; he started weeping and kept repeating the following verse till morning:

> *Or do those who commit ill-deeds suppose that We shall make them as those who believe and do good works, the same in life and death? Bad is their judgement!* [al-Jāthiyah 45: 21]

Sa'īd ibn Jubair (may Allah have mercy on him) was leading the prayers in Ramaḍān and when he reached the verse:

> *...but they will come to know when yokes are about their necks and chains. They are dragged through boiling waters; then they are thrust into the Fire*. [al-Mu'min 40: 70–2]

he kept repeating it. Once he recited the following verse in *tahajjud*; he repeated it more than twenty time. He used to weep in night vigil so much that it affected his eyes.

Masrūq (may Allah have mercy on him), disciple of Ibn 'Abbās, at times used to recite Sūrah ar-Ra'd the whole night.

Once Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (may Allah have mercy on him) passed the whole night reciting and repeating:

> *And if ye would count the bounty of Allah ye cannot reckon it*. [Ibrāhīm 14: 34]

When asked about it, he said there is admonition and warning in it. Whichever side we look we see some or the other bounty of Allah. And what of His bounties we do not know are more.

Imām Abū Ḥanīfah (may Allah have mercy on him) once recited the following verse in *tahajjud*:

> *Nay, but the Hour (of doom) is their appointed tryst and the Hour will be more wretched and more bitter than their earthly failure*. [al-Qamar 54: 46]

and kept repeating it until morning.

This tradition continued from one generation to another and love of the "Word of God", the bounty of the glorious Qur'ān continued without break. Historians recorded the love of the engrossment of the scholars, reformers, saint-sages (ascetics) and researchers in books of Islamic history.

The famous author, Traditionalist, historian and critic 'Allāmah ibn al-Jawzī used to read the entire glorious Qur'ān once every week. Sulṭān Ṣalāḥuddīn, the conqueror of Bait-ul-Maqdis, used to hear two or three sections of the glorious Qur'ān from his night watchman in his castle-tower. He was very tender-hearted and usually tears flowed from his eyes on hearing the glorious Qur'ān. Shaikh-ul-Islām ibn Taimiyah was imprisoned in 726 AH and breathed his last in 728 AH. During this period of two years and four months, his main occupation was recitation of the glorious Qur'ān and he recited it entirely over eighty times with his brother Zainuddīn. When he reached the following verse:

> *Lo! The righteous will dwell among gardens and rivers, firmly established in the favour of a Mighty King*. [al-Qamar 54: 54–5]

instead of his brother, he asked 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥib and 'Abdullāh az-Zar'ī to recite it – they were righteous persons and he liked their *qirā'at* – and before they had finished it, he passed away.

The great scholars of Islam whose mother tongue was Arabic devoted their whole life to the service of Islam and research in Islamic subjects. Non-Arabs and sages of the *ummah* were also very fond of recitation and were devoted to the study of the glorious Qur'ān. They used to learn it by heart and their number is legion. There are many incidents which prove their deep yearning for the glorious Qur'ān and an admonition for others. A few such incidents are described below.

The saint-sage of the eighth century, Khwājah Niẓāmuddīn Sultan-ul-Awliā (d. 725 AH), was very fond of the glorious Qur'ān. He used to emphasise the need to recite it and learn it by heart. When the poet Amīr Ḥasan became his disciple, he was very old and reciting poetry was his great passion. Khwājah Niẓāmuddīn advised him that he should devote more time to the recitation of the glorious Qur'ān than to composing poetry.

Shaikh Sharafuddīn Yaḥyā Manyari (d. 786 AH) had a great liking for reciting and listening to the recitation of the glorious Qur'ān. His disciple Shaikh Zain Badr 'Arabī wrote the following around the time of his death:

> Amīr Shihābuddīn, brother of Malik Ḥusāmuddīn, came to attend on him with his son. Shaikh Sharafuddīn saw the boy and asked if he would recite five verses of the glorious Qur'ān. Those persons who were present there said, he is too young. The son of Sayyed Ẓahīruddīn Muftī was also present. When *Miyān* Hilāl realised that he was desirous of hearing the glorious Qur'ān, he sent for that boy and asked

him to recite (any) five verses from the glorious Qur'ān. When Sayyed Ẓahīruddīn also realised it, he asked his son to recite any five verses. The boy came forward and recited the last verses of Sūrah al-Fatḥ. Shaikh Sharafuddīn was sitting in a reclined position, but he sat upright and listened to the glorious Qur'ān with rapt attention.

It is related about Mujaddid Alf Thānī Shaikh Aḥmad Sarhindī (d. 1034 A.H) that at the time of his recitation of the glorious Qur'ān those present realised from his countenance the deep satisfaction and inner joy that he gained from the glorious Qur'ān. When he recited the "verses of chastisement" or those verses expressing wonder and questioning, his tone used to change accordingly. During the month of Ramaḍān, he used to read the whole of the glorious Qur'ān at least three times. Though he could recite the glorious Qur'ān by heart, he used to recite it often and listen to the recitation of others outside the month of Ramaḍān as well.

Once when Maulānā Faḍle Raḥmān Ganj-Murādābādī (d. 1313 A.H) was reciting the Qur'ān, he became so overwelmed that he said to his disciple Maulānā Tajammul Ḥusain: "If you acquire even a glimpse of the special taste that we get in the Qur'ān, you wouldn't be able to sit at home but you will tear your clothes off and run into the wilderness." He gave a deep sigh and went to his room and remained ill for several days.

Maulānā Sayyed Muḥammad 'Alī Mungerī related that, "In the beginning I said to my shaikh, Maulānā Faḍle Raḥmān that I do not get the same enjoyment in reciting the Qur'ān that I get from poetry." He said, "You are still far away from nearness (to Allah). The taste that one gets in the Qur'ān when you are blessed with nearness to Allah, you cannot get it in anything else."

Maulānā Tajammul Ḥusain writes that once Maulānā Faḍle Raḥmān said: "Recite the Qur'ān and aḥādīth regularly, you will find that it is as if Allah dwells in your heart."

He also writes that once Maulānā Muḥammad 'Alī was present in a gathering with his other disciples when the translation of the glorious Qur'ān was being read. When the following verse was recited:

> *And make mention (O Muḥammad) in the Scripture of Abraham. Lo! He was a saint, a prophet.* [Maryam 19: 41]

he translated it and recited the verse in which Prophet Ismā'īl (peace be upon him) has been mentioned:

> *...and (Ishmael) was acceptable in the sight of his Lord.* [Maryam 19: 55]

and he translated it as:

> *and he was the beloved of Allah.*

He then cried and fell unconscious and was confined to bed for two months.

Maulānā 'Abdul Qādir Rāipurī (may Allah have mercy on him) writes about his *Shaikh* and spiritual teacher Shāh 'Abdur Raḥīm Rāipurī (d.1337 AH/1919 CE):

> He saw him reciting the glorious Qur'ān several times during *tahajjud*. He used to recite long chapters and sob at times. When he recited the verses about chastisement he used to sob and "seek pardon" (*istighfār*). When he recited the verses about the Mercy, he used to become overjoyed or sometimes remain silent with awe.

There are other famous incidences in history about the effect of the holy Qur'ān on both past and contemporary saintly people who devoted their lives in the service of Allah. These can be found in various biographies which have been written about them.

Index of Qur'ānic Verses

SAYYED ABUL ḤASAN 'ALĪ NADWĪ, (1914–99) was one of the leading Muslim scholars of our time. He hailed from a family which has produced such illustrious figures as Sayyed Aḥmad *shahīd* (1786–1831). He was the Rector of Nadwatul 'Ulamā', Lucknow; Chairman, Managing Committee, Dārul Muṣannifīn (Shibli Academy), Azamgarh, India; member, Academy of Arts and Letters, Damascus, and the Higher Council of the Islamic University, Madīnah; and was the member of the Executive Committee of the Federation of Islamic Universities, Rabat and of the Academy of Arabic Language, Oman. He was a founder member of the Constituent Council of the Muslim World League, Makkah and Chairman of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford, U.K. He received the King Faiṣal Award and numerous other awards from national and international bodies for his services to the cause of Islam.

He was a powerful, eloquent writer and orator, both in Urdu and Arabic. His works in both these languages are numerous; many have been translated into English, among them are: *Islam and the World*; *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*; *Stories of the Prophets; Muḥammad, the Last Prophet; Ibn Taimiyah, Life and Achievements; Muslims: Beliefs, Customs and Traditions; Stories from Islamic History; Starlight View of Islam's Past and the Minaret Speaks.*

In ***Studying the Glorious Qur'ān***, we have an immensely readable work which offers us the means to understand and appreciate how best to approach the Qur'ān as also avoid specific shortcomings in method and purpose. This is achieved in the acceptance of the Qur'ān as the final Word of God whilst still retaining the Revelations of the earlier Ibrāhimic traditions and in understanding the Qur'ān as the Ultimate Guidance and Reformation for all mankind, for all times.

The specific preconditions and qualities which enable one to profit from the Qur'ān as also those impediments which get in the way of this are finely delineated. By way of final instruction, examples from the lives of the first and early Muslims, and their ways and means of reciting and contemplating the Qur'ān are also included.

The astonishing facts and rich content of this book will appeal most to the enquiring mind of the general reader and the academic alike.



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